

**"WHAT PRICE GLORY, CAPTAIN FLAGG?"
LEADER COMPETENCE IN THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES**

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies**

by

**RICHARD S. FAULKNER, MAJ, USA
M.A., University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 1996**

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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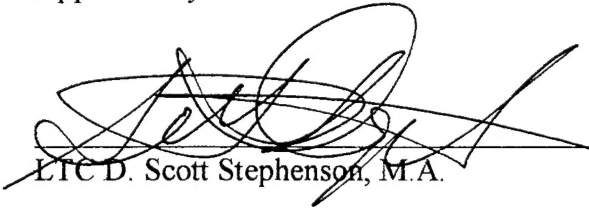
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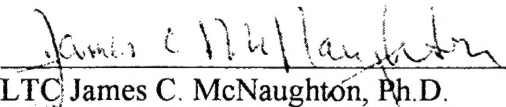
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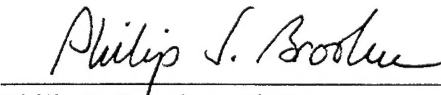
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Approved by:

_____, Thesis committee Chairman
LTC D. Scott Stephenson, M.A.

_____, Consulting Faculty
LTC James C. McNaughton, Ph.D.

Accepted this 2d day of June 2000 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

“WHAT PRICE GLORY, CAPTAIN FLAGG?”: LEADER COMPETENCY IN THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES by MAJ Richard S. Faulkner, USA, 133 pages.

This study examines how the American army trained and developed its company-level leaders during the First World War. It highlights the prewar army's concepts of leadership and explains the limitations of the army's system for selecting and training officers and noncommissioned officers. When the United States entered World War I, the army was unprepared to expand the officer and noncommissioned officer corps to lead a mass army in a modern war. This unpreparedness forced the army to adopt ad hoc measures to select and train junior leaders that compromised leadership competency and professional development. The systemic problems of mass mobilization and the need to rapidly deploy an army to Europe further hindered efforts to build competent junior leaders both stateside and in France. The army's failure to properly train and develop its junior leaders ultimately blunted the combat effectiveness of the American Expeditionary Forces, adversely affected unit cohesion, and caused unnecessary casualties on the battlefield.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Laurence Stallings and Maxwell Anderson's play *What Price Glory?* (1924) an American soldier confronts his company commander after the officer's costly attacks failed to breach a German stronghold in a World War I French town. The young doughboy challenges,

What price glory now? Why in God's name can't we go home? Who gives a damn about this lousy, stinking little town but the poor French bastards that live here? . . . I won't have the platoon asking me every minute of the livelong night when they are going to be relieved. . . . Flagg, I tell you, you can shoot me, but I won't stand for it. . . . I'll take 'em out to-night and kill you if you get in my way.¹

These words reflect the soldier's exasperation with a leader unable to deal competently with a battlefield situation. As a World War I veteran, Stallings realistically depicted American military leadership in that war. The fictional Captain Flagg had risen too far too fast and was unprepared for the responsibilities of command in battle.

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, the army was a frontier-imperial constabulary force of 18,000 officers and 200,000 enlisted soldiers. Within weeks of the declaration of the war, army planners estimated that the nation would need to mobilize two-to-four million soldiers and commission over two-hundred-thousand officers to fight Germany.² The mobilization of such a massive number of enlisted soldiers was in itself a daunting task. The procurement and training of the expanding officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps was an even greater challenge. The army could, in theory, produce adequately trained riflemen within a few months; officers and sergeants, however, usually required years to master the tactical, technical, and leadership responsibilities of their positions. Under the stress of time, the army's solution was to establish three-month-long Officer Training Camps (OTCs) to commission captains and lieutenants. The army also chose to select and promote sergeants directly from the ranks of the draftees. Although these solutions filled the required positions in the expanding National Army divisions, the battalion-level leaders' competency remained

questionable. Hastily and often unrealistically trained and uncertain of their duties and responsibilities, far too many of the American Expeditionary Forces' (AEF) officers and sergeants were unready for the challenges of modern warfare and their roles as combat leaders. This lack of leader "know how," combined with the systemic problems associated with mass mobilization resulted in the formation of uncohesive battalions incapable of executing offensive tactics beyond costly frontal attacks. During the Meuse Argonne Campaign, America's largest battle of the war, the AEF was worn and blunted by its headlong attacks against a skillful German defense, hamstrung by a hopelessly tangled supply line, and slowly bled by unexpectedly high casualties and the loss of 100,000 soldiers straggling behind the lines.

While a myriad of interrelated systemic problems had led the AEF to its unfortunate situation, the poor leadership of many of the army's officers and sergeants was a major factor in the Americans' lackluster performance in the Meuse Argonne Campaign and the war. During the First World War, the American army's failure to develop an integrated and realistic leadership training and professional development program, coupled with the systemic problems associated with a short-notice mass mobilization, resulted in the creation of a junior officer and NCO corps that was not tactically or technically competent to fight a modern war. This lack of competency caused the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) unnecessary casualties and adversely affected unit cohesion and combat effectiveness during the war.

This paper will focus on the Army's pre-World War I concepts of leadership and professional development, how the American army procured and trained battalion-level officers and non-commissioned officers during the war, how well the training and professional development that these soldier received prior to combat prepared them to be competent leaders in action, and how the systemic problems associated with raising a large conscript army in a very short amount of time exacerbated the challenges of combat leadership. The thesis will concentrate on the officers commissioned through the OTCs and on the sergeants at battalion-

level and below. The OTCs graduates comprised over 74 percent of the officers commissioned during the war (excluding physicians, chaplains, and technical specialists commissioned directly from civilian life) and over two-thirds of the army's line officers. National Guard officers comprised only 9 percent of the commissioned ranks while those of the Regular Army accounted for only 5 percent of the officer corps during the war.³ The shortage of Regular and National Guard leaders also meant that a number of OTC officers and draftee sergeants filled positions in "Regular" and "National Guard" divisions. The study will concentrate on leadership in infantry units. Infantry officers and soldiers constituted the bulk of the troops in the AEF, and the army leadership from Pershing downward considered the infantry as the core element of the army. Failures in leadership competency in infantry units are also generally more obvious in the historical record. The thesis will not delve into the leadership competency of African American officers in the AEF. African American officers faced problems in leadership training and professional development identical to those of their white peers, but the endemic racism of the period added a dimension to the subject that could not be adequately addressed in this paper.

For this paper, "combat leadership" is defined as the art of getting soldiers to do willingly what instinct and society has programmed them to not to do: to place themselves at mortal risk and to kill others (with greater emphasis on the former concern). To be effective, battlefield leaders must show a genuine concern for their subordinates' welfare and demonstrate a level of tactical competency that assures soldiers that their lives will not be placed at unnecessary risk. Ultimately, battlefield leadership rests on a foundation of mutual trust and confidence between the leader and the lead. The cornerstone of that confidence is the subordinates' faith that their leaders have mastered the technical and tactical aspects of their jobs. Without this basic foundation, units cannot build the cohesion necessary to overcome the survival instincts and social strictures on killing other humans.

The other term requiring definition is "leader competency." The present-day *Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership*, states that leaders must master the interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical skills of their positions to be effective, and thus competent, combat leaders. Competent leaders know how to deal with and motivate people to accomplish the mission, can exercise sound judgments based on quick analysis of the situation, have the military expertise and "know how" to accomplish their assigned tasks, and understand how to employ their units in combat to minimize friendly casualties while maximizing damage to the enemy.⁴ This modern definition has a timeless quality that was equally applicable to the leaders of the AEF. In fact, the pre-World War I Army's own institutional conceptions and expectations of the responsibilities, characteristics, and tactical competencies of combat leaders was remarkably similar to those of today.

This thesis will also attempt to fill in some of the historiographical gaps of how the AEF prepared for and performed in the war. Of all the books and articles about the AEF none directly address the topic of junior leadership competency in the AEF. Historians in the last twenty years have explored the larger issues of the AEF's senior leadership and their attempts to build a tactical doctrine but have given scant attention to combat at the company level and below. Much of this scholarship has been critical of Pershing's leadership and the AEF's operational effectiveness. For example, James Rainey's "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I" (*Parameters*, 1983) noted that the AEF's problems on the battlefield resulted from Pershing's inability to transform his nebulous concept of "open warfare" into a sound doctrine that could be used by battlefield commanders. In a similar vein, David Trask's *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking* (Kansas, 1993) contends that Pershing's insistence on an independent American army, in spite of the AEF's glaring training and readiness problems, hindered the Allied war effort in 1918 and may have led to his relief had the war lasted. While these works are valuable in understanding the large overarching problems of the American war

effort, they do not attempt to explain how these issues directly affected junior leaders and soldiers on the battlefield.

Timothy Nenninger, the National Archives' military records archivist, has likewise taken a critical view of the AEF's performance. In "Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918" (*Military Review*, October 1987), he argues that the American disdain for "European" methods along with their own flawed training and personnel practices prevented the AEF from becoming an effective fighting force. Nenninger expands this argument in Allan Millett and Williamson Murray's *Military Effectiveness: The First World War*. In his chapter "American Military Effectiveness in the First World War," Nenninger concludes that while the United States was strong in the political-strategic arena, the nation's overall unpreparedness to fight a modern war and its subsequent rapid mobilization undermined the AEF's operational and tactical efficiency. Although Nenninger examines the tactical level of war, he gives little attention to small unit leader competency or its pervasive affect on the AEF's operations and overall effectiveness.

Other historians disagree with Rainey, Trask, and Nenninger's contention that the AEF was a flawed and ineffective combat force. Paul Braim, Edward Coffman, and Kenneth Hamburger argue that while the AEF had its problems, in the end the army was able to identify and correct its shortcomings and make significant contributions to the Allied war effort. For example, in *Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces* (CMH Pub 24-1, 1997), Hamburger maintains that Pershing and the AEF General Headquarters were well aware of the army's training deficiencies and took successful measures to correct them. Hamburger points to the AEF's school system and GHQ efforts to capture "lessons learned" as evidence that, as an institution, the AEF was able to correct its tactical imperfections by learning from its past battlefield mistakes. Unfortunately, Hamburger and the others often fail to see the high cost in casualties and unit cohesion associated with gaining "lessons learned." Hamburger also misses

the point that the AEF's efforts to correct its training problems often resulted in unintended detrimental consequences. Thus, while the AEF school system had noble goals, it often took key junior leaders away from their units at the critical times when they could have been building unit cohesion and their own leadership abilities.

Unlike previous studies of the AEF, this thesis focuses on leadership at the company level. Leadership at that most basic level was one of the most important factors in determining how Americans fought their Great War. While Pershing and his corps commanders could plan operations and order their execution, in the end, it was the sergeants, lieutenants, and captains, far removed from Chaumont, who determined what would be accomplished on the battlefield. When the junior leaders failed, faltered, and bungled, the AEF's battles became confused and uncoordinated slugging matches that confounded the plans and expectations of the army's senior leaders. This is as true today as it was in 1918. Ultimately, the average doughboy had to pay the "price of glory" for the incompetence of his junior leaders.

CHAPTER 2

LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD WAR I ERA ARMY

The Army of the World War I era had no *FM 22-100, Army Leadership*, to define, codify, or explain the organization's views on leadership. In fact, the *Field Service Regulations of 1913*, the Army's only service-wide source for its wartime doctrine, made only vague and passing references to the command and management of soldiers in combat.⁵ One senior World War I officer bemoaned:

We have lectures and manuals and treatises and textbooks on all sorts of technical subjects. On the subject of how to manage men, the most important subject of all, the young officer will find pretty nearly a barren field. A few paragraphs in Army Regulations, a few scattered magazine articles, and a general order or two compose the literature available. Neither at West Point, or our service schools, has this subject received the attention that it deserves.⁶

In fact, the field was not as barren as he portrayed. The prewar army understood the centrality of leadership to combat operations and had developed its own institutional norms to define its expectations of officers and NCOs.

The army had worked to improve and codify its professional standards throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century. To answer Congressional concerns that the Army's seniority system promoted officers regardless of individual physical ability and professional competency, the Army instituted a requirement in 1890 that all lieutenants and captains eligible for promotion first had to pass a rigorous series of physical and professional examinations. The professional examinations tested the officer's tactical and technical competency through both a written exam and their "hands-on" ability to maneuver a company of soldiers. The institutional process for ensuring the leadership abilities and professional competency of the officer corps was also furthered by the Secretary of War's 1891 order that all officers below the rank of colonel be given efficiency reports by their superiors. The combined effects of these moves allowed the officer corps to establish the oversight and internal self-regulating process that was, and is, required of all professions. The efficiency reports consisted of two parts: one where the officer

himself enumerated his professional reading, publications, and special skills, and the other where his commanders offered their evaluations of the officer's "professional zeal and abilities [and]... capacity for command" and the morale, welfare, and training of the soldiers under his command.⁷ The efficiency report system was codified into Army Regulations at the turn of the century. The Army Regulations of 1913 (those in effect throughout World War I) required that all officers (generals and colonels included) be given a yearly evaluation by their immediate superior to establish a "true estimate of standing, ability, and special fitness for any military duty."⁸ The regulation continued the requirement for the rated officer to submit a personal report of their professional attainments. The examinations and efficiency reports did much to standardize the Army's unwritten norms for leadership and professionalism.

Pershing attempted to keep this system of professional oversight working in the AEF. The pace of mobilization and operations prevented the AEF from continuing promotion exams, but a modified efficiency report system continued during the war. The 11 March 1918 AEF General Orders 39 required efficiency reports for all AEF majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels, and the maintenance by all lieutenants and captains of an "officer's record book" that recorded their superior's estimation of their physical abilities, intelligence, leadership, personal qualities, and general value to the Army.⁹ However, the hectic pace of AEF operations in the summer and fall of 1918, the high turnover of junior officers, and the lack of professional knowledge among many rating officers undermined Pershing's attempts to use these evaluation tools as a source for inculcating the Army's institutional leadership norms in the AEF's officers.

With the Military Academy and traditional military colleges such as Norwich, the Virginia Military Institute, and the Citadel providing the bulk of the Army's prewar officer corps, a young officer was expected to enter the service with a basic foundation of discipline and military knowledge. This basic professional development and knowledge would then be fostered

and expanded through experience and the mentorship of his superiors during his initial assignments. As Major General David Shanks noted,

Before our entry into the present war promotion in our army was relatively slow. A second lieutenant was assigned to a company, and he had the benefit of learning by observation and experience. His captain was generally an officer who had received a certain amount of seasoning. The green subaltern had abundant opportunity to become acquainted with his profession gradually.¹⁰

Beginning in the 1880s, the army also attempted to improve professionalism in the service through a system of post, branch, and advanced tactical schools. Fort Leavenworth's Infantry and Cavalry School of Application, for example (established in 1881 and renamed the General Service and Staff College in 1902), evolved into the army's primary means of instilling its junior officers with a common tactical doctrine and professional vision.¹¹ However, the military's officer "apprenticeship" and education system could not be applied to a rapidly expanding mass army.

In many ways, the NCO corps mirrored the officer corps' lack of formalized junior leader development. With no formal NCO education system, the Army expected its enlisted men to learn the duties and responsibilities of being NCOs from watching and emulating long-service sergeants. Although the NCO corps lacked the efficiency report system of the officer corps, they were still expected by officers and other NCOs to internalize the institutional leadership norms of the army.¹² Unfortunately, with the rapid expansion of the military during the First World War the Army did not have the time or cadre of mentoring experienced officers and NCOs to keep this ad hoc leadership development system working.

While the army lacked a formal leadership doctrine, a number of officers wrote books and articles to capture and explain the military's institutional leadership norms. These unofficial publications were intended to educate National Guard and young regular officers on what the institution expected from them as combat leaders. Army officer-educators, such as Major James A. Moss and Lieutenant Colonel Lincoln C. Andrews, published numerous manuals and articles

on military training and leadership in the years preceding the First World War.¹³ In the early months of the war, Army officers wrote or republished manuals on military leadership in an attempt to pass on the Army's institutional norms to the junior officers in the OTCs. When examining these works, one is struck by the similarities between what the Army expected of its leaders in the First World War and that which the Army expects of its leaders today. In his 1918 manual *Leadership and Military Training*, Lincoln Andrews warned the young officers, "Do not assume that in putting on your uniform you have clothed yourself with any particular omniscience." As Andrews pointed out,

To attain the confidence and respect of your men, the first requisite is superior knowledge. That will give you self-confidence to appear as a leader, and will justify your men in following you.¹⁴

He also noted that good leaders shared hardships with their soldiers, refused to allow their own comforts and prerogatives take precedence over those of their men, and always looked after the soldiers' health, welfare, and comfort.¹⁵ While the present *FM 22-100, Army Leadership*, defines the attributes of effective military leadership as the mastery of interpersonal, conceptual, technical, and tactical skills, the underlying expectations of combat leaders is notably comparable to those of World War I. The pre-World War I Army, as with today's, expected its leaders to exercise sound judgment, know how to motivate soldiers to accomplish their missions, and possess the "know how" to carry out the military tasks of their level of command.¹⁶ The Army believed (and believes) that the foundations of effective combat leadership were tactical and technical competency and the importance of leading by example. As Lincoln Andrews warned would-be leaders in 1916, "You are a sorry object pretending to lead when there are men in [the] ranks who know your part better than you do."¹⁷

When the United States entered the First World War, the American Army had a firm, albeit largely unwritten, concept of its professional expectations of junior leaders. While the prewar Army had no formal basis for its leadership doctrine, the historical precedents of past

campaigns and the officer efficiency report system had created an institutional norm for the competencies, duties, and responsibilities that the Army expected of its leaders. Although the Army understood what “right looked like” when it came to leader professionalism and competency, it faced a grave challenge when it came to passing its institutional leadership norms on to the citizen officers and sergeants of the First World War. As the first officer candidates filled the OTCs in the summer of 1917 the Army realized that it not only had to turn these civilians into soldiers, but also had to give them the tactical instruction and leadership training that would inspire confidence in others to follow them into battle. Under the press of time and numbers, the Army’s prewar system of ad hoc leader professional development could not be adapted to fit the needs of the mass National Army of the First World War.

CHAPTER 3

THE OFFICER TRAINING SYSTEM 1910-1916

In his 1913 Annual Report, Chief of Staff of the Army Leonard Wood warned:

I . . . invite attention to the necessity for building up, with as little delay as practicable, a reserve of officers qualified to serve as company officers for reserves or volunteers. If we were called on to mobilize to meet a first-class power, we should require immediately several thousand officers; where are we to get them? This is a matter of vital importance, and one which should be attended to at once and not left to the rush, hurry, and confusion proceeding a war. . . steps should be taken to provide them in time of peace and not throw away thousands of lives on account of lack of most necessary preparation through use of means ready to our hands¹⁸

Within four years of this statement the United States was at war with a first-class power and the nation had done little to mitigate the "rush, hurry, and confusion" of mobilization. Woodrow Wilson's decision to mobilize a mass draftee-based army for use in France presented the immediate problem of providing officers for the nascent force. In theory Wood's question of "Where are we to get them?" should have been answered largely by the federalization of National Guard officers and the recruitment of military-trained students from the Training Camp Movement and the nation's Land-Grant colleges. Unfortunately, none of these sources delivered the quality or quantity of trained officers and officer candidates that the army needed. Under the crush of time and necessity the army ultimately adopted a system of officer selection and training that did not meet its battlefield requirements.

The idea that the army would need to expand its officer corps in wartime was not unique to the World War One era. In the midst of the Civil War, Congressman Justin Morrill proposed a bill offering federal land grants to colleges and universities "where the leading object shall be . . . scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach. . . agriculture and the mechanical arts."¹⁹ Morrill envisioned the Land-Grant colleges as a more democratic, cost effective, and reliable source of wartime officers than the "treason-tainted" Military Academy. The 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act unfortunately left many questions and issues of military training in the colleges unanswered. The legislation was open to interpretation on whether or not

the instruction was compulsory for the students and on the governmental organization that held ultimate oversight for the program's implementation. While the War Department was responsible for providing instructors and equipment to support military training, the Interior Department was responsible for overseeing land-grant funding and the overall administration of the program. Faced with these ambiguities, and the realities of low post-Civil War budgets, the War Department did little to standardize or support military training in the Land-Grant colleges between 1865 and 1912.²⁰

The Spanish American War and the nation's subsequent need to protect and police its overseas possessions led Secretary of War Elihu Root and military reformers like Leonard Wood to reexamine the Land-Grant colleges as a source for officers. The Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection had demonstrated how unprepared the nation was to expand the existing officer corps. To lead the Volunteer Regiments (federal controlled) raised for the war the army ultimately had to resort to the direct commissioning of Regular NCOs and civilians. Of the 2,000 line officers in service in 1902, 414 were former enlisted men and 512 were commissioned directly from civilian life with no previous military education.²¹ To prevent a reoccurrence of this ad hoc method of obtaining officers, Root and Wood were determined to transform the Land Grant Colleges into a viable source for officers. Between 1909 and 1914 the army took steps to standardize training in the colleges and to define its expectations of the military program. In all educational institutions offering military instruction the War Department gave professors of Military Science and Tactics the mission to "qualify students who enter the military departments of such institutions to be company officers of infantry volunteers, or militia."²² To accomplish this mission the War Department mandated that able-bodied college students would have to take 84 one-hour blocks of instruction over the course of two years. The instruction was to be mostly lecture-based and focused on the Infantry Drill, Field Service, and Small Arms Firing Regulations.²³

The War Department's reform efforts had little effect on the military education in the Land-Grant colleges prior to World War I. The ambiguities of the original Morrill Act continued to hamper the army's efforts to define student eligibility and requirements for military instruction. As Leonard Wood noted in 1913, "Under the present law there is no specified standard of military instruction required, and no penalty attached to insufficient or improper military instruction that endangers the receipt of the annual funds appropriated."²⁴ One Professor of Military Science and Tactics noted that most academics placed little importance on military education and supported tactical instruction only to the degree required to "get by the law." He also argued that a "clash of cultures" between the officers and civilian instructors further eroded the army's attempts to improve military instruction. As he pointed out,

College professors as a general thing are men of peace. Few of them have had any military training, and with the exception of those in the departments of history but few have made any special study of the question of national defense. They are inclined to look upon the military as a needless expenditure of energy and resources, and upon military men as consumers contributing nothing to the world.²⁵

These tensions prevented the reforms from ever reaching their desired degree of standardization in military education.

Even when military instruction was conducted in educational institutions it seldom seems to have focused on subjects that would prepare the students to become company-grade officers. Far too much of the instruction was basic recruit training with little relevance to modern warfare or to the leadership requirements of being an officer. The War Department's *Annual Report of 1913* noted, "At the last annual inspection it was generally found that sufficient progress had not been made in practical instruction; that too much time was spent in close order (drill) and ceremonies at the expense of good theoretical instruction and practical fieldwork."²⁶ This problem even extended to military schools and colleges. In 1914 Captain Richard Stackton, the Assistant Commandant of the Bordentown Military Institute, argued,

While some schools are excellent in the instruction given, in the majority of cases the cadet has little or no real military information or interest. The average ex-

military-school student is not. . . suited for a commission in the National Guard or Volunteers. . . in most institutions, mere *drill* is given, and the youth graduates with the impression that a faultless parade and the ability to form a line of skirmishers and fire a few blanks. . . are the sole requirements of a complete military education.²⁷

In an address to the Engineering Association of Land Grant Colleges, General Wood admitted that the War Department's own "inertness" and the lack of officers suitable to teach college students was ultimately to blame for much of the poor military instruction. Captain Ira Reeves believed that the shortcomings stemmed from unimaginative officers who attempted to train college students as if they were recruits.²⁸ The army had no set standard for the officers it selected to teach at the Land Grant Colleges. While the instructors were generally officers of good standing (for example, John Pershing taught at the University of Nebraska from 1891 to 1895), they had no special qualification or training to teach at the college level. In most cases, the army saw instructor duty as a well-deserved break for its officers from the grind and isolation of frontier service.²⁹

Whatever the reason, it is clear that the military education of Land-Grant colleges and other educational institutions did little to prepare their students for commissioning. Although many of these former students would eventually become officers in World War One, the army realized the uneven nature of their military education and required them to attend an Officer Training Camp prior to commissioning.

The National Defense Act of 1916 tried to address the problems of military education by replacing the former system with the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). The ROTC instituted a two-year compulsory military education course for Land-Grant colleges, standardized training for all institutions, and established a baseline competency for commissioning.³⁰

Unfortunately, the ROTC reforms came far too late to have any effect on the training of officers for the war. In the final analysis, the military education system in the nation's colleges and universities did little to create competent company-grade officers for the war.

The National Guard was also seen by many political leaders as a potential source for military leaders during mobilization. Just as he had done with the Regular Army, Elihu Root took measures to modernize and rationalize the National Guard. The Dick Act of 1903 aligned the National Guard's organization and equipment with those of the Regular Army, provided federal funding and Regular Army personnel to assist training, and stipulated the minimal training standards that the federal governments expected from the states. Additional legislation in 1908, 1912, and 1916 continued the trend toward transforming the Guard into a reliable national reserve which would be more responsive to the federal government.³¹ Unfortunately, due to state and local-level inertia the reform legislation only marginally increased Guard officer competency and failed to overturn decades of Regular Army mistrust of the state organizations. As historian Timothy Nenninger notes, "The National Guard of 1917 was nearly as unprepared for war as the state militias had been in 1898."³²

Regular Army officers had grave misgivings about the readiness and efficiency of their National Guard peers. The regulars deplored the continued Guard tradition of electing junior officers and the political intrigues associated with high command at the state level. Secretary Root opened the Regular Army education system to the National Guard in 1904, but by 1917 only three guardsmen had graduated from the School of the Line and only one (New York's John O'Ryan) had attended the Army War College.³³ Most National Guard that applied to the School of the Line could not pass its stringent entrance examinations. States with large National Guard organizations, such as New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, recognized the problems of training and leading citizen soldiers and established state service schools for educating Guard officers and NCOs. In most cases these state service schools were formed after 1910 and consequently effected only a handful of Guard officers.³⁴ Generally, leadership development in the National Guard prior to World War I was ad hoc and too often focused on administration rather than on honing tactical and technical skills. The lack of leadership and professional

competency in some Guard officers led one enlisted man to remark after the war, "We had some beaubs from the N.G. that should have been with the boy scouts."³⁵

Another problem with using the National Guard to provide officers for a mass army was simply numbers. Guard units did not have the amount of officers and qualified NCOs to lead even their own organizations. When Wilson alerted the National Guard for service on the Mexican Border on 16 June 1916, the poor readiness of the units called up became apparent. At the time of the call, many Guard units were at only 42 percent of their authorized wartime strengths and the total Guard could muster only 8,589 officers and 123,650 enlisted men.

Commenting on both the quality and quantity of the guardsmen a retired general noted,

Of those borne on the rolls at the time of the call 7,258 failed to respond and 23,721 were rejected for physical disability. . . 63 percent. . . had less than three months' military training of any kind and of these more than 60,000 had no training at all and 56,813 men had never fired a rifle.³⁶

These problems were further exacerbated by the mass mobilization for the Great War. The War Department called 12,115 Guard officers to active duty in 1917. Of these, 501 were rejected for physical disability, efficiency boards reclassified 341, and 638 were encouraged by the army to resign. Many of the remaining junior officers had joined their units in the ten months between the Mexican border call-up and the declaration of war, and were mostly untrained. In all, the War Department estimated that 40 percent of Guard officers called to service were untrained. During the war, only 6 percent of the army's officers were National Guardsmen, and those units nominally considered "National Guard Divisions" were forced to rely on draftees and OTC officers to fill their ranks.³⁷ As with the civilian educational institutions, the National Guard failed to provide the quality and quantity of officers that were needed for mobilization.

As previously noted, Leonard Wood and other reformers had long worried over the ability of civilian educational institutions and the National Guard to provide officers for a mass army. In 1913 Wood proposed the creation of a pool of reserve officers independent of the National Guard who would be commissioned after completing at least two years of standardized

military education in their colleges. These men would serve one year on active duty to complete and certify their training, and then be returned to civilian life as a ready officer reserve. While Wood's plan was never implemented, in 1913 he organized two five-week-long Students' Military Instruction Camps at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Monterey, California, to demonstrate its feasibility. Although the stated goal of the camps was to "increase the present inadequate personnel of the trained military reserve," the army had a deeper and more important agenda. Wood admitted that the training in the camps was insufficient, but countered,

The benefit to the country [is] in the fostering of a patriotic spirit, without which a nation soon loses its virility and falls into decay; also the dissemination among the citizens of the country by the return of the students who attended the camp of a more thorough knowledge of military policy, the true military history of our country, and its military needs, all necessary to the complete education of a well-equipped citizen in order that he may himself form just and true opinions on military topics.³⁸

This attitude would run through the civilian training camps until the outbreak of the war; training would be secondary to the creation of "student-missionaries" to spread Wood's and Emory Upton's gospel of "a sound military policy."

The success of the first student camps and the outbreak of the war in Europe encouraged the army and civic leaders to expand civilian military training to include businessmen and other professionals in the summers of 1914, 1915, and 1916. Out of this ferment came the Military Training Camp Association (MTCA) and the famous "Plattsburg Movement." By 1916 the army and the MTCA had established twelve Plattsburg-type training camps across the nation. During these thirty-day camps, over 16,000 civilians received military instruction. Under the provisions of the National Defense Act of 1916, the civilians who attended these camps were eligible for reserve officer commissions.³⁹

Like the Students' Military Instruction Camps, the MTCA's Plattsburg camps had agendas that overshadowed the training of competent military leaders. As a Regular Army instructor at one of the 1916 camps argued,

This movement has started America to thinking in military terms and has educated them to think along ever broadening lines. . . . Whatever else they may have gained from the experience, they were in a position to consider the military needs of the Country in a broad, intelligent way. . . . They make missionaries. . . . In other words, each one of them goes home a self-constituted apostle of the Doctrine of National Preparedness.⁴⁰

The students were not in camp so much to learn the profession of arms as to be converted to the true Uptonian faith in a large Regular Army establishment able to rapidly expand in wartime by calling up Federal trained and controlled reservists. The Plattsburgers not only pushed for Universal Military Training but also used the preparedness issue as a political whip to beat Woodrow Wilson for his neutrality policies. In this charged arena, military training again took a back seat to political partisanship.

When stripped of lectures on the need for a "sound military policy," the military training that the students actually received at the Plattsburg camps was far from complete. As Regular Army Major M. B. Stewart noted,

The average military man is inclined to be skeptical, to look on the movement as a new kind of fad, valuable in a way because it serves to attract men who could not otherwise be interested in military matters, but nevertheless a fad that can lead to nothing practical in the way of real military training or preparedness. . . . Most military men are willing to acknowledge the educational value of these camps, but they are likely to balk at the idea that they are productive of any military training of practical worth. They are inclined to discount the idea that anything worth while from a military standpoint can be accomplished in thirty days.⁴¹

The training in the camps emphasized close order drill, route marching, basic marksmanship, and the bare basics of fieldcraft and tactics. A training schedule for one of the 1916 camps revealed that during the thirty day training period the student spent as much time in administrative tasks such as inprocessing, equipment issue, and immunizations as he did in basic tactical training. Marching and fieldcraft accounted for 25 percent of the training time while marksmanship was less than 19 percent of the overall schedule. The training was also hindered by a lack of competent instructors. The deployment of most of the Regular Army to the Mexican Border in

1916 depleted the training cadres in many camps and forced the army and the MTCA to use students who had graduated from a previous course as instructors.⁴²

Perhaps the greatest problem with the Plattsburg camps was the lack of leadership training. The training was detached from the realities of modern warfare that had been so strongly demonstrated on the Western Front and did little to prepare the students to lead soldiers in combat. Leonard Wood publicly stated "the men covered the ground ordinarily covered by our recruits in 4 ½ months and they received more hours of actual training than is received by the average militiaman in an enlistment of 3 years."⁴³ Unfortunately, these men were not recruits but were potential officers. Little was done in the way of training them in the tactical skills required of a company-grade officer or evaluating their leadership abilities. Even more unfortunately, the army decided that the "Plattsburg system" would serve as its model for officer training and development for the Great War. Although the army had granted nearly 8,000 Plattsburgers reserve commissions, it still required them to attend Officer Training Camps after the war began. In a damning indictment of the quality of screening and training of the Plattsburg officers, the army noted that many of them were "found entirely unqualified for commissioned grades and . . . were reduced in grade."⁴⁴ In many cases the army demoted or removed these officers for incompetence or unsuitability to command.

CHAPTER 4

THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF OFFICERS FOR THE WAR

From the moment the United States entered the war in April 1917 the crush of time and events overseas began to influence the way the nation mobilized its forces and trained its officers. French Marshal Joseph Joffre and British General George Bridges arrived in Washington in April to inform their new allies about the state of their respective war efforts and to beg for fresh American soldiers. Pershing confirmed their sobering assessments of the Allied situation upon his arrival in France in June. This sense of "hurry and dread" was only reinforced by the worsening Allied conditions in 1917. The eight months between April and November witnessed the failure of the Kerensky government against the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the bloody failure of the British offensive at Passchendaele, the repulse of the Nivelle Offensive and subsequent French army mutinies, and the Italian disaster at Caporetto. The perception of Wilson and the War Department was clear: get an army to France to stabilize the Allies or risk losing the war.⁴⁵

Within a month of the United States' declaration of war the Wilson administration made the decision that the nation would send an expeditionary army to fight in France. The bulk of this force would be composed of draftee "National Army" units with the remainder made up of existing National Guard and Regular Army units brought up to strength with volunteers and conscripts. Congress passed the Selective Service Act in May to fill the ranks of the mass army, but left the question of who would lead them unanswered. As Leonard Wood had predicted, the war found the army short of many thousands of officers. The army did not even have a way of identifying potential officers or any system to train them. The "rush, hurry, and confusion" that Wood had feared in 1913 had become a bewildering reality in 1917.

The executive committee of the MTCA offered the army a way out of its dilemma. In a letter to Secretary of War Newton Baker, the MTCA suggested that the army convert the existing

Plattsburg camp sites into Officer Training Camps. The MTCA also offered the War Department its files of past and prospective Plattsburg candidates and its administrative assistance in recruiting and communicating with potential officers. With the broad sanction of Article 58 of the National Defense Act of 1916, and with no other plan available, Baker jumped at the MTCA's offer. Beginning on 8 May 1917, the OTCs would offer a three-month course of instruction designed to provide the junior line officers needed for National Army.⁴⁶ Neither the Regular Army nor the National Guard was happy with the OTC plan. Many regulars doubted the OTC's ability to train officers in three months but realized that the situation presented them with no other option. Reflecting this "wait and see attitude" an officer in 1917 mused,

When the war was declared we were confronted with a condition and not a theory; with a problem whose solution demanded immediate attention- we needed officers, and we needed them at once. Not everyone will agree that the solution adopted was the best, and undoubtedly there are many men in the regular service who have been hit hard by the methods employed, while time will show whether all the officers who have come from the training camps in fact measure up to their responsibilities. But it must be remembered that those methods were adopted because the Army itself had not provided for such an emergency.⁴⁷

In all, the OTCs (and the later Central Officers Schools) produced over two-thirds of the army's junior line officers during the war. In a series of four classes the OTCs commissioned 66,374 officers between 8 May 1917 and 26 August 1918. The Central Officers Schools that replaced the OTCs in the summer of 1918 commissioned an additional 14,194 officers before the war ended. Yet, even these titanic efforts failed to meet the army's demand for leaders. High casualties among junior leaders in the summer of 1918 and the National Army's continued need for officers led the War Department to enlist all of the nation's able-bodied college students into the Students' Army Training Corps (SATC). Beginning 1 October 1918, the SATC militarized the nation's educational institutions by turning them into mills for the production of junior officers.⁴⁸ The operation of the OTCs and SATC demonstrate the "stop-gap" nature of the American mobilization. While the officer training system did manage to fill the ranks with

officers, the improvised character of the training produced leaders of wildly uneven abilities, questionable competencies, and unrealistic concepts of warfare.

While the Regular Army establishment was weary of the OTC system, it was certain and unyielding on the type of person that it wanted for officers. The National Defense Act of 1916 gave the president and the army great latitude in prescribing the qualifications for commissioning. Although the army's only stated qualification for commissioned service was that the applicant be a male citizen between twenty years and nine months to forty four years old, it strongly preferred college students and graduates for officer training. In 1916 Leonard Wood had derailed an attempt by the MTCA to "democratize" the Plattsburg camps by allowing in students who only had high school diplomas. This partiality in favor of college men had deep roots in the army's thinking and harks back to Jefferson's idea of a nation run by an "aristocracy of merit." The army maintained this attitude despite the fact that college-educated people made up only four percent of the nation's population at the time.⁴⁹ To some officers college education was the pure operation of the Social Darwinists' "survival of the fit." As one officer noted,

The college young man makes the ideal officer. His mental equipment is usually such as desired, he is ordinarily a man of sufficient physical development to meet the physical demands of an officer, and he is necessarily a man of more than usual ambition and energy, otherwise he would not be in college.⁵⁰

Many army officers believed that college educated professionals and businessmen would fit easily into the army's leadership mold. The two Regular Army officers that authored *The Plattsbug Manual* (the most popular handbook among aspiring officers) argued,

Many of those elements that make success in a military man are exactly the same as those that make a man successful anywhere. A president of a university, a lawyer or banker or merchant or engineer, has exactly the same kind of daily problems to solve, and requires much the same talents, as those possessed by a military leader.⁵¹

Another soldier was even more blunt about the value of business experience in potential officers,

Let us remember that the object of the work is not to make finished soldiers, but to produce practical fighting men. The fundamentals of the fighting man's art, when boiled down and stripped of their niceties, are few and simple. They amount to the machine-like business of taking human life, today more than ever. Men who have been

accustomed to the application of business methods to other problems ought not to find it difficult to apply them equally as successfully to this simple task.⁵²

As is the case today, the army of 1917 ultimately believed that a college education indicated a person's mental ability to learn and adapt. The army's preference for college educated men also stemmed from the societal assumptions prevalent during the Progressive Era. In general, "progressives" believed that rational systems, efficiently managed by specially trained middle and upper class professionals, could deal with the woes of a rapidly changing society.⁵³ The progressive-turned officer would be the perfect solution to the army's growing pains.

The army's assumption that untrained college men *could* learn the profession of arms was justified; their assumption that a college education and business acumen *automatically* fitted one to be a combat leader was not. While the OTCs were designed to draw "civilians who were by education, experience and natural aptitude especially qualified for leadership," the training camps had no uniform system of evaluating the candidates' leadership ability or to accurately test their reactions under stress.⁵⁴ Since the army had no other screening system in place at the outbreak of the war, its preference for college men may have been merited, but that choice tended to eliminate other equally qualified candidates. In 1916 Major General John F. Bell had suggested to the Secretary of War that as high as 20 percent of the Regular Army's NCO corps had the leadership ability and training to be commissioned in time of war. Bell's plan met strong opposition from the commandant of schools at Fort Leavenworth and, for better or worse, the army's tacit predilection for college-educated officers remained in place throughout the war.⁵⁵ Ironically, the man who Pershing considered the AEF's greatest soldier of the war was the regular NCO-turned captain, Sam Woodfill.⁵⁶

In the excitement of the early months of the war the army had no serious problem in finding suitable men for the OTCs. The nation's colleges were hotbeds of pro-Allied Anglophilia and the preparedness movement. German actions in Belgium and their sinking of the *Lusitania* had outraged the mostly Anglo-Saxon Protestant college population and encouraged a

nationalistic zeal in the officer candidates.⁵⁷ The First World War was a period of hyper-patriotism in the nation and the war struck many Americans as a crusade to protect civilization against barbarous “Prussianism.” As he departed for France a machine gun officer wrote, “We are finally on the way to show the Huns that the Americans are not too proud to fight, to make the war safe for democracy, to assure supremacy of Freedom of the Seas and the rights of Smaller Nations.”⁵⁸ The hyper-patriotic crusading fervor was especially pronounced in the middle- and upper-class men who made up the majority of the wartime officer corps. The majority of these men came of age during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt and visions of his charge up San Juan Hill shaped their perceptions of war as an exciting, manly, and glorious endeavor. These young men of the Progressive Era generally shared his passion for the “strenuous life” and his belief that education and social standing brought with it the duty of *noblesse oblige*.⁵⁹ All this meant that the young men who flocked to the OTCs in 1917 and 1918 were generally highly motivated to serve and ideologically committed to the cause.

With good human raw material to work with, the army still faced the challenge of what to do with them. The army had only eighteen days from Secretary Baker’s order establishing the OTCs to the arrival of the first officer candidates in the camps. Due to Wilson’s neutrality policy and the day to day administrative and operational demands for “policing” the Mexican border and the nation’s overseas possessions, the War Department entered the war with no plan to train a mass army, not to mention one for training the officers to lead it. The conventional army wisdom of the time was that recruits could be turned into competent infantrymen in three to six months, but what about officers? The rapid pace of mobilization meant that the first two series of OTCs (there were four separate iterations or “series” of OTCs during the war) were nonstandardized slap-dash affairs whose quality varied widely based on the availability of equipment and personnel. The OTC camps themselves were established and run by any officers that could be spared by the Regular Army. In many cases these officers were those recalled from retirement,

unfit for active service, or deemed "excess" by regiments mobilizing for war. As can be imagined, few commanders were willing to give up their best officers to serve in the OTCs. The first two series of OTCs trained over 55 percent of the war's reserve officers and contained the leaders mostly likely to have seen combat with the AEF. While Army Chief of Staff Peyton March improved and standardized OTC and Central Officer School training in 1918, the Ludendorff Offensive and high American officer casualties led to many shortcuts in the candidate training in the last year of the war. For example, the infantry Central Officer Schools cut their course from three to two months in late September 1918 to fill the ranks of officers lost in the Aisne-Marne and St. Mihiel offensives.

Few envisioned that the "90-day wonders" that emerged from the OTCs were ready and rounded officers. Shortly after the war ended March admitted,

In planning for an intensive course of training for three month there was no thought that trained officers could be produced in that short period of time. It was believed however that some of the necessary fundamentals could be taught, and that the course would permit the selection of those who showed that they were capable of becoming instructors and leaders of soldiers, and that belief was fully justified by the results.⁶⁰

Ralph Perry, the Secretary of the War Department Committee on Education and Special Training, admitted that "the men who were finally commissioned were not trained officers," but rather, "picked men who had mastered the rudiments and knew how to profit by the experience and ordeal that awaited them."⁶¹ The War Department assumed that being white, college educated, middle or upper class and experienced in business or the professions somehow belied an innate ability to lead soldiers. Building on this dubious assumption, the role of the training camps was mainly to impart basic soldier skills and transition the candidates from civilian to military life. The new officer would round out his professional development through individual study and "hands on experience" in his unit.

The training of the OTCs' 90 day wonders was ultimately too rudimentary and unfocused to prepared the young officers for their future tactical missions or for the

responsibilities of leadership. The tempo of mobilization also left precious little time for self-study. Training at the OTCs generally consisted of close order drill, basic rifle marksmanship, route marches, courtesies of the service, basic military law, and the fundamentals of infantry tactics. While this training should have given the officers a sketchy but sound foundation of military knowledge, insufficient and under-trained instructors, shortages of ranges and equipment, and a lack of time further undermined the quality and effectiveness of candidate indoctrination.

The lack of competent instructors to teach the candidates was perhaps the greatest flaw in the War Department's plans. The army's decision to keep its regular units intact left few experienced officers available for training in the OTCs. One artillery first lieutenant noted that "officers acting as instructors at these camps were often poor judges of men and lacking in knowledge of methods and subject matter." Another wrote "My instructor in Field Artillery was a Coast Artillery Captain who knew nothing of Field Artillery." An infantry captain later recalled, "I have never seen such pathetic attempts at instruction as I saw in the First Officers Training Camp."⁶² Despite the army's attempts to rotate experienced officers from France to serve as instructors, this situation did not improve as the war progressed. In many cases the OTC students were being trained by officers with little more knowledge or experience as themselves. Of the 30 officer-instructors at the 3rd series OTC at Camp Devens, only the camp commander, Lieutenant Colonel George Stuart, had been commissioned prior to 1916. The remainders were reserve officers commissioned a year earlier from the first two series OTCs.⁶³

The type and quality of training that the candidates received at the OTCs was also problematic. All too often the training was nearly identical to that given to recruits with little time devoted to leadership development. In a thumbnail sketch of his daily schedule OTC candidate Charles Sorust wrote,

We get up at a quarter to six, have physical exercise at 6:15 AM, breakfast at a quarter to seven, drill at 7:30 AM, then comes bayonette exercise at 8:30 AM, then medical

hygiene . . . at 9:40 AM, then drill and then locker inspection at 11:30 AM, and dinner at 11:45, then a[t] 1 o'clock we have bomb and hand grenade throwing, we only throw bricks, and at 2:40 PM we dig trenches, and at 3:25 PM we have French class until 4:15 and then supper at 4:45 PM. . . . After supper I am either washing clothes or cleaning my rifle, because at 6 PM it is very dark.⁶⁴

Close order drill and bayonet practice were given far too high of a significance while the skills needed to command a platoon in combat were given short shift. A candidate at Fort Riley described his training as "throwing a gun around and hiking out in the country, taking bayonet exercise jabbing imaginary enemies through imaginary bodies, waving the semaphore signals and drilling in squads."⁶⁵ Another OTC student dismissed his training as "three months spent. . . learning wig-wag and semaphore signaling and reenacting Civil War combat problems through the mosquita filled swamps of Arkansas."⁶⁶ Looking back on his officer training one combat veteran noted,

Our army had learned no lessons of modern warfare as developed in Europe in the two years the war had been going on. This was again in evidence in the 1st Training Camp for officers[,] much time [was] wasted in learning methods. . . which were useless in Europe.⁶⁷

The army had only three months to impart the basic soldier and leader skills to its fledgling officers, but unfortunately spent much of the candidates' time on training of questionable use to their professional development or to the conditions that they would encounter in France.

The problem of realistic OTC training stemmed from the army's lack of a clear concept of exactly what type of warfare that it would face in France. Pershing insisted that the stalemate in France was an aberration and that the American army's superior drive, morale and marksmanship would force the Germans out of their trenches. Once free from the trenches and into "open warfare," the Americans' greater skill and ability at maneuver would allow them to corner and destroy the inferior German army.⁶⁸ Many Americans, from Pershing to the most junior lieutenant, convinced themselves that years in the trenches had blunted the offensive edge of the Allies and had sapped their aggressiveness, initiative and will to win. As one senior GHQ staff officer argued,

In many respects, the tactics and techniques of our allies are not suited to American characteristics or the American mission in this war. The French do not like the rifle, do not know how to use it, and the infantry is consequently too entirely dependent upon a powerful artillery support. Their infantry lacks aggressiveness and discipline. The British infantry lacks initiative and leadership.⁶⁹

Much of the training in the OTCs, however, continued to focus on the movement of mass formations and the intricacies of trench warfare. In a letter written shortly before his graduation from the Fort Riley OTC, Milton Bernet wrote,

For the past week we have been studying barbed wire entanglements and trench warfare as it is now fought in Europe; and believe me it is some study. We charge from one trench to the next, stabbing the dummies as we go in with our bayonets, occupying and investing the trench and then go on to the next.⁷⁰

Bernet's training not only contradicted Pershing's vision of the AEF, but also no longer reflected the realities of warfare on the Western Front. The American officers-to-be trained on tactics resembling those used by the British at the first battle of the Somme. The officer candidates trained to attack fortified positions using successive lines of infantry even though the Europeans had slowly and painfully learned what massed machine guns and artillery would do to such a dense throng of humanity. This continued "reenacting Civil War combat problems" later influenced the way the officers fought in France. The backwardness of the training was further exacerbated by the lack of modern equipment for use in OTC instruction. The students often had to content themselves with the theoretical employment of machine guns, mortars, automatic rifles, and the other implements of modern warfare because the weapons were not available for hands on training (this will be covered in more detail in the next chapter).

The poor training at the OTCs had a long-term consequence on the overall effectiveness of the American army. John J. Pershing proclaimed that the tactical doctrine of the American army would be built upon individual rifle marksmanship, yet the officer candidates received only thirty-six hours of marksmanship training. In 1916 the army had considered this amount of training to be the bare minimum for a prewar regular army recruit.⁷¹ During the war, the army placed inducted enlisted soldiers directly into the combat units in which they would serve. The

new soldiers then received the equivalent of basic training under the direction and tutelage of the noncommissioned and company grade officers who would eventually lead them in combat. The officers' incomplete and unfocused training from the OTCs left them unprepared to assume their duties as the primary trainers in their units.

In addition to their sketchy tactical training, the OTCs also did a very poor job of preparing their students for the harsh realities of combat and command. The graduating officers of the OTCs often left with an overly unrealistic and romantic view of war in general and warfare on the Western Front in particular. Although the Europeans entered the war with similar false visions of glory, the reality and the scores of wounded returning from the front made it impossible for their armies to maintain their rosy illusions of combat. Geographic distance and censorship allowed the Americans to maintain their fantasies throughout their stateside training. Photos from the various camps show men training in immaculate trenches and making mock attacks in formations that would have made Frederick the Great smile.⁷² Graduates of Camp Sherman's third series OTC were assured that command in war was elementary,

After a master machine has been thought out and its component parts fettered into an obedient whole, dominated by a single brain, we say simple! Nothing remarkable about that! . . . There are Napoleons of promise at Camp Sherman! Schoolboys of the future will read of new Grants, new Lees, new Washingtons, new Shermans!⁷³

A graduate from a 1917 OTC wrote that America's entry into the war would return "the warfare of the old days, the warfare of our own West and South, when sabers flashed to the beats of galloping horses, and men went miles over the top instead of yards."⁷⁴ In a similar vein one OTC student wrote home, "Just think of it! The future may hold in store for me the chance to charge with thousands of other horsemen the retreating Germans being hurled back to Berlin."⁷⁵ These unrealistic views even appeared in the semi-official handbooks popular among reserve officers. The American army of 1917 was as certain of the superiority of the offense as any of the European armies of 1914. The *Plattsburg Manual* assured young officers that trenches and machine guns could be overcome by a vigorous attack pushed to the point of "bayonet against

bayonet, man against man, and nerve against nerve.” In the attack the soldier’s “clear eye and steady nerves, his soul’s blood and iron, constitute a better defense than steel and concrete.”⁷⁶

The officers’ own self-delusions, their sketchy training at OTC, and the army’s visions of an American *attaque outrance* all combined to overshadow the need for tactical “know how.”

Unfortunately this war would not be like the Civil War, where a junior officer’s leadership was judged by his personal bravery and ability to keep a dressed line moving forward. Officers carried these unrealistic notions of warfare with them to their new units and it often colored the unit’s subsequent training. The lack of psychological preparation for the deadly realities of modern combat would later prove to be disheartening and disillusioning to many officers in France.

The fledgling officers leaving the OTCs took with them flaws and gaps in their leadership knowledge that continued to snowball once they arrived in their units. With the OTCs devoting so little time to leadership, the new officers often found that they had to learn the duties and responsibilities of company and platoon command through “on-the-job” training. The experience of the OTCs did little to provide the officers with the key element that ensured leader credibility: technical competency. As a battalion commander noted of his new officers,

Careful selection at the training camps has undoubtedly served to weed out the more defective material which presented itself for commissions. Three months of intensive exercise and the most superficial training in the theory of leadership have naturally failed to impress this human material, though it is of the finest quality, with the true character of officers. . . . Their intelligence, enthusiasm, energy, and potential capacity for leadership are in no sense satisfactory substitutes for the knowledge and experience which in the main they lack.⁷⁷

The OTC graduates had only enough skills and knowledge to keep them one step ahead of the draftees that they were soon to lead. Many new officers understood their shortcomings and tried to overcome them. Lieutenant Milton Bernet recalled, “every candidate realized that if he were fortunate enough to receive a commission, he would have to supplement his actual work with a great deal of further study.”⁷⁸ As Bernet and the other officers filling the new divisions in the fall

and winter of 1917 and 1918 discovered, the pace and problems of mobilization left little time for learning the basics of their new trade.

CHAPTER 5

"THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND" STATESIDE LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The United States' efforts to raise a mass army and its general lack of knowledge, experience, and equipment to fight a modern war hindered the creation of a competent core of junior leaders. The American army entered the war with no tanks, few pieces of modern artillery, and only a handful of obsolete aircraft. Few officers had commanded anything larger than a regiment, and no officer had any experience commanding a unit larger than a division. The vast infrastructure for mobilization, the cantonments, supply depots, and port facilities, were literally being built as the first draftees were being called to service. Given the size of the Regular Army and the War Department's decision to keep regular formations intact, the new National Army and National Guard divisions usually had a cadre of only thirty one Regular Army officers. The cadre provided the division's generals, primary staff officers, the logistics commander, and three field grade officers per regiment. Few of these officers had any experience in their new positions or any inkling of the scale and challenges of the mobilization. Into this chaotic situation were thrown the OTC officers and their newly minted NCOs. The confusion of receiving, equipping, and training the mass of draftees left these junior leaders with little time to understand the duties and responsibilities of their new positions or to build the tactical competencies required in combat.

With the OTCs located on the same posts as the National Army cantonments, for the young "90 day wonders" it was a short walk from the OTC graduation field to their lives as company grade officers. The letters, diaries, and memoirs of those officers reveal that many of them were apprehensive and unsure about assuming their new roles.

As one young officer recorded,

"Reposing special trust and confidence in my patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities," W[oodrow] Wilson, Esq. has this day appointed me 1st Lieut., Field Artillery, of his army. He's an optimist! Getting used to being saluted. Losing the Uncle Tom

feeling of "candidate." Occupied with size, shape and position of shoulder bars. Feel like a Knight of Pythias. . . . Having had our spirits thoroughly broken by three months at Sheridan, find it hard to assume the mental attitude of honest-to-goodness officers.⁷⁹

Another recalled, "I was commissioned a second lieutenant by an act of Congress. Well it could have been by an act of God, but I was still no great military man after only ninety days. I had an expression in those days, "The Star-Spangled Mess;" it referred to just about everything we were doing."⁸⁰ Even the soothsayers of the new science of psychology gave dire warnings of the fate awaiting the new officers. Noting the effects of individualism and egalitarianism on American society, Yale professor and army consultant William Hocking wrote,

Those who say it is hard for an American to take orders may not realize that it is equally hard for the average American to give them. . . . While the experienced commander forgets his own special personality, and uses quite naturally the voice and authority of the organization, the raw commander is conscious of his individual self, and consequently realizes that the words falling out of his mouth have hardly the weight that should make men obey them. . . . He knows he has to face, not so much the surly criticism as the more searching humor of his men. . . . He needs the manner which only experience can justify, the manner of confidence, authority, prestige.⁸¹

Thus damned by science and uncertain of his own "confidence, authority, [and] prestige," the young officer went forward to meet the men he would lead into battle.

The young company grade officers' first duties were to select the NCOs for their units. The army had long understood the importance of a strong cadre of NCOs to the smooth running of its organizations. At the outbreak of the war a long-service Regular officer admitted, "experience has shown that the efficiency, discipline, and reputation of a command depend to a great extent on its noncommissioned officers. In fact it is often said, 'The noncommissioned officers are the backbone of an army'."⁸² The prewar army, however, had not seen the need to create a rational system for NCO selection and promotion. With the Regular Army having no NCO academies, promotion boards, or examinations, sergeants and corporals were promoted to serve at the pleasure of the company commander. As select "captain's men," the prewar NCOs held their ranks only within their units; transfers usually meant instant demotion. Slow

promotions in the prewar army meant that company-grade officers generally had years of experience to draw upon when selecting their sergeants.

The lack of a rational system for selecting and developing NCOs presented the OTC officers with a dilemma. Training manuals had warned company officers that they would have to pick forty men to be NCOs by promoting those with the "best qualifications for leadership."⁸³ The army planned that the first OTC officers would arrive in their divisions one to two weeks ahead of the first contingents of draftees. Faced with the deluge of 100 to 200 raw recruits the officers did the best they could to fill the NCO ranks. Some officers simply opted to assign NCOs based on seniority. In these units NCOs owed their positions to the fact that they arrive days or hours prior to their comrades. Other officers tried to select their NCOs based on the soldier's previous occupation or leadership experience. Regular officers suggested that recruits who had been foremen, contractors, or "gang bosses" were most suited to be NCOs because of their past experience of handling workmen.⁸⁴ Given the need to maintain some semblance of order and discipline in the ranks, some NCOs gained their stripes solely on their ability to overawe or bully their fellow recruits into line. These unsystematic procedures for NCO selection would have a profound influence on the way the American army trained and fought. Regardless of their method of selection, the newly minted sergeants and corporals had no real knowledge or practical experience to merit their promotion or assure their authority. As one sergeant recalled, "The confusion was unbelievable- it seemed as if nobody knew anything for sure. I was a corporal within three months and knew very little about the army."⁸⁵

While the army had traditionally relied on noncommissioned officers to instruct and "whip into shape" new recruits, the promotion and training of sergeants and corporals proved even more haphazard than that of the officers. A post war board of officers studying the problems and achievements of the AEF lamented the "poorly trained and rather dull non-commissioned officers" of the American army.⁸⁶ The board members failed to grasp that the

American NCOs generally received no special training and little incentive for their assignment. The position of NCO carried few privileges in terms of pay and status and even fewer responsibilities. An infantry battalion commander observed,

Among the so-called noncommissioned officers, who are but the more apt enlisted personnel with chevrons, no high sense of individual obligation to their ill-defined and imperfectly understood responsibilities exists, and being, like those over whom they have been set, but novices at the game, they are lacking utterly in the confidence which is necessary to force them to the front.⁸⁷

That the new NCO's responsibilities remained "ill-defined and imperfectly understood" was the fault of the army. In 1914 the War Department issued the *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates* for each branch of the service. These manuals were updated in 1917 to serve as the recruit's handbook for basic military knowledge. As the title implied, these manuals were also to instruct NCOs on their duties and responsibilities. Unfortunately, the information in the books was far too broad and general to be of any practical use to the NCOs. The books covered how to give close order drill, but nowhere was the new sergeant instructed on the principles of leadership or on his role in combat. The manual stated that the NCOs overarching duty was to enforce discipline and "obey strictly and execute promptly the lawful orders of your superiors."⁸⁸ Beyond those admonitions, the inexperienced NCO was given no "helpful hints" on how to turn a group of civilians into soldiers or get those same men to move forward in an attack.

Throughout the war the army made little effort to distinguish NCOs from privates. Even the title *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates* is suggestive of this attitude. Given the fact that the majority of NCOs had no more experience than the privates they lead, this attitude may be understandable. However, this outlook seems to have sidetracked any serious efforts to systematically educate and develop NCOs. Although some units held after-hours NCO classes, the army never created a system of schools to foster NCO professionalism.⁸⁹ The OTC graduates often lacked the knowledge and experience to correct this situation. Without a mechanism to develop knowledgeable corporals and sergeants, their status and authority

remained questionable to their officers and privates. This lack of any real differentiation between NCOs and privates, and the company and platoon commander's power to demote NCOs at will, tended to further erode the prestige of sergeants. When the soldiers realized that NCO rank was "easy come, easy go" they naturally took a jaundiced view of those positions.

As one soldier wrote home from Camp Funston, Kansas,

I was made a sergent 4 weeks ago and got Busted the next week after wards for going absent without leave there was me and 3 Serg'ts 2 Corp'l and one First Serg't in the guard House and I got Busted Ha Ha didnt want it any way. to much trouble.⁹⁰

Immediately following the war the Morale Branch of the War College Plans Division submitted a questionnaire to officers leaving the army to gauge their opinions and attitudes toward their service. Looking back on their service nearly all the officers polled agreed that they and the army had not done enough to give their NCOs the respect, prestige, or authority to accomplish their tasks or to encourage their privates to follow them.⁹¹ This flaw in NCO development would haunt the army in training and combat.

Without a strong cadre of competent NCOs to draw upon, the junior officers were left to "sink or swim" in the training of their units. As one infantry captain recalled, "[The] training of non-commissioned officers [was] slighted almost to the point of neglect. Officers, from the Company Commander down, [were] obliged to spend fifty percent of their time and energy in doing the work of non-commissioned officers."⁹² The army's belief that junior officers could round out their skills with "on-the-job training" within their units was incompatible with actual conditions in the companies. With their own experience and knowledge barely above the level of a prewar private, the junior officers found themselves suddenly responsible for the basic instruction of their soldiers. This left little time for the officers to concentrate on developing their own tactical competence. The under-trained lieutenants and captains frantically scrambled to learn the basics that they were expected to impart to their subordinates. For example, W. A. Sirmon, a lieutenant in the 82nd Division's 325th Infantry, recalled spending many of his

mornings in hurried classes so he could give the same lessons to his soldiers later on in the day.⁹³ Lieutenant Charles Bolte, a graduate of OTC and three Plattsburg summer camps, noted, "When it came to teaching the 45 automatic pistol, I had to sit up all night long with a manual just learning how you took it apart and put it together again so the next day I could sit down as if I knew all about it and try to teach this company how to do this very complicated task. It was a case of the blind leading the blind."⁹⁴ The phrase "blind leading the blind" peppers the writings of the war's veterans and is perhaps the best description of the tragi-comic circumstances of the American mobilization. The hectic conditions under which the officers operated left little time for continued professional development and self-study. Some units established after hours "officers schools" to further their officer's military education. Though well intentioned, these classes often lacked qualified instructors and "hands-on" application. Lieutenant Milton Bernet complained, "This school was valueless and uninteresting. Attendance. . . as supposed to be compulsory but we all tried to duck it as it was so useless."⁹⁵ Thus, to these half-trained company officers, largely unaided by their NCOs, fell the responsibility for the training and leading of the new army.

The junior leaders' efforts at training themselves and their soldiers were further complicated by severe shortages of equipment, misguided army levy policies, and the physical conditions under which they operated. The army's shortage of weapons prevented the new leaders from fully understanding the lethality and complexities of the modern battlefield. Scarcities of training ranges and equipment added extra levels of stress to already overburdened and unsure company level leaders.

The experience of the 82nd Division demonstrates the effects that the equipment shortages had on training and leadership development. The acute shortage of weapons in the 82nd Division forced officers to contract with local saw mills for the production of dummy rifles. The "Camp Gordon 1917 Model Rifle," as the doughboys derisively called the wooden weapons,

allowed units to conduct limited instructions in close order marching and bayonet training but had few other useful purposes. Though the 82nd Division was formed in August 1917, some of the unit's infantry regiments were not completely armed with rifles until the first week of February 1918.⁹⁶ Rifles were but one of the shortages that hamstrung the division's training. The division Chief of Staff, Colonel G. Edward Buxton, recalled,

The training of specialists in the United States was necessarily of a theoretical character. The Divisional Automatic Rifle School possessed about a dozen Chauchat rifles; the regiments had none. Colt machine guns were issued to machine gun companies, although this weapon was never to be used in battle. The Stokes Mortar platoon never saw a 3-inch Stokes Mortar while in the United States, and the 37-mm gun platoons possessed collectively one of these weapons during the last two or three weeks of their stay at Camp Gordon. A limited number of offensive and defensive hand grenades were obtained and thrown by selected officers and non-commissioned officers at the Division Grenade School. The men of one regiment witnessed a demonstration where four rifle grenades were fired.⁹⁷

These shortages not only hindered the training of the unit's weapons specialists, but also prevented the junior officers from understanding the employment and potential of the new military technologies.

Equipment problems were not limited to the 82nd Division or other National Army units. The "National Guard" 36th Division, had to rotate its limited stock of rifles around its infantry units to accomplish the bare minimum of marksmanship training. As late as 18 December 1917 most of the division's machine gun battalions had not been issued weapons and had only received a modicum of training on the obsolete Colt and Benet-Mercier machine guns.⁹⁸ However, in nearly all the divisions, artillery units seemed most affected by equipment shortages. The army entered the war with only 604 field guns and 180 heavy howitzers, many of which were obsolete.⁹⁹ Through much of 1917 the new artillerymen had to content themselves with practicing their trade on guns made from "dismantled wagons, sewer pipes and logs."

Artillerymen in the 90th Division did not fire their guns until March 1918, only ten weeks before the unit departed for France.¹⁰⁰ The shortage of guns prevented artillery officers from adequately learning how to control and adjust fires. This contributed to much of the AEF's later problems

with infantry-artillery coordination. Regardless of their branches, the young officers' lack experience with modern weapons limited their professional development and later influenced their battlefield actions.

Even after units overcame shortages of equipment, they still faced the daunting task of using inexperienced officers to teach their soldiers the skills necessary to perform and survive on the modern battlefield. Peyton March argued, "The quality of troops and their value as an effective force depends to a very large extent upon the character and sufficiency of their training, which in turn is dependent upon the officers who are designated to instruct them in camp and lead them in battle."¹⁰¹ The majority of the American soldiers who landed in France could only be considered half trained.¹⁰² Training time in the United States often centered on subjects which the novice officers understood and could easily teach, such as close order and bayonet drill. As was the case in the OTCs, far too much of the training in the new divisions was centered on the unique aspects of trench warfare and mastering obsolete battle formations. It should come as no surprise that the young officers passed on to their soldiers the incorrect tactics and assumptions that they had so recently learned themselves. Looking back on the training he gave and received, one lieutenant confessed, "Too much stress [was] put on form, ceremonies, close order drill and other West Point relics of the Roman phalanx age. . . too much valuable time [was] spent teaching 'squads right' and not enough making every man able to use any type of machine gun."¹⁰³ Without their own base of experience to draw upon, the junior officers often found it difficult to instruct their men in the more complex tasks of soldiering. Despite the time and effort that his unit devoted to marksmanship training, the 82nd Division's famous Alvin York remembered that his comrades remained "the worstest shots that ever shut eyes and pulled a trigger," and that their shooting "missed everything but the sky."¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, as American units prepared to deploy overseas, the experiences of Alvin York and the 82nd Division were the rule rather than the

exception. A War Department inspection of division cantonments in 1917 revealed serious problems with the training conducted in the new units. The inspectors noted,

Schedules of drills and instruction show an ample provision of time for this phase of instruction. Want of time, therefore, cannot be given as an excuse. *The defect lies in a want of accurate knowledge on the part of company officers and noncommissioned officers and failure on part of battalion commanders and commanders of higher units properly to supervise the drills and instruction of their commands. . . . They fail to make satisfactory progress in drilling their commands because they do not see the mistakes which are constantly made, and do not, as a consequence, correct them.* (original emphasis) ¹⁰⁵

Systemic problems with the army's management of its wartime manpower also affected junior leader competency. One of the most important aspects of combat leadership was, and is, the leader's ability to weld his unit into a cohesive and disciplined team. Noting this time-honored wisdom, an experienced Regular officer wrote,

Any group of individuals working together for a common purpose is going to establish unconsciously a group spirit of some kind. This has got to happen. The leader knows that success largely depends on . . . this spirit. . . . By getting to know the men and "how they feel about it," he keeps in close touch with the spirit. . . . and make the men feel a membership in his team. ¹⁰⁶

Despite the army's desire for cohesive units, its personnel levy policies disrupted the creation of "group spirit" and undermined the effectiveness of junior leaders. The hectic pace of mobilization and changing priorities in the War Department meant that many of the army's divisions were forced to give up large drafts of their soldiers to fill other units.

The experience of the 82nd Division is illustrative of the continual building and tearing down of the American divisions. In August 1917 the War Department activated the division and began to man it with draftees from Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. With the division approaching full strength in October 1917, the War Department reversed itself and ordered most of the soldiers attached to the 82nd transferred to the 30th, 31st, and 81st Divisions. The War Department's decision left the 82nd with a cadre of only 783 men to rebuild the division's organization. ¹⁰⁷ More importantly, six weeks of cohesion building and training had gone to waste. In late October and November, the division was brought back up to strength with draftees

from New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. The new levy contained a large percentage of recent immigrants unable to speak or read English. This further hindered training and forced the division commander to organize English classes to give the soldiers the basic language knowledge necessary for combat.¹⁰⁸ This problem was not limited to the 82nd Division; in 1917 one in three Americans was a first generation immigrant and one in five draftees was foreign born.¹⁰⁹

The division's manpower challenges did not end with the arrival of the northeastern draftees. In an effort to pool soldiers who had civilian experience in certain crafts and industrial jobs, Washington again ordered the 82nd to transfer over 3,000 specialists from its ranks in November 1917. This levy fell hardest among the unit's NCOs. One bitter officer remarked,

The Division believed that the War Department had overlooked one important consideration. Although the soldier might be a very good plumber, lumberman, blacksmith or structural iron worker, a great deal of Government time and money had been expended in making him an even more valuable specialist in his present occupation: namely that of a non-commissioned officer, bayonet instructor, hand grenade expert or machine gunner.¹¹⁰

As a result of the ugly wave of xenophobia and nativism that swept over the United States in the first year of the war, the division's number of trained men was further reduced by the forced discharge of over 1,400 men considered to be enemy aliens by the War Department in March 1918.¹¹¹ Although the War Department promised to refill the division with suitable specialists and replacements prior to their embarkation, the 82nd received only levies of untrained draftees. Some of these raw replacements arrived in the division only days before its departure from the United States. Georgian Private Ralph Flynt was inducted into the Army on 2 April 1918; eighteen days later he was on board one of the ships carrying the 82nd to France.¹¹²

The disruptions caused by the army's levy policy were not confined to the 82nd Division. The *American Expeditionary Forces Order of Battle* notes that many National Guard and most National Army divisions experienced large turnovers of personnel prior to their movement overseas.¹¹³ In each case the levies had a corrosive effect on unit training and cohesion. In some

instances combat officers were removed from their units to serve as instructors in divisional and post schools or to fill garrison and administrative positions. The loss of NCOs and privates forced officers to continually readjust their training plans to account for the influx of raw recruits. With each new levy the officers and remaining NCOs also had to reassert their authority and try to rebuild the "group spirit" of their units. This constant "reinventing of the wheel" was but another obstacle to the leaders' efforts to advance their own professional development. The effort given to integrating the raw draftees left even less time for the officers and NCOs to move on to more advanced levels of unit training or to devote to self-study.

Finally, even the forces of nature seemed to work against the development of competent leaders. The winter of 1917-1918 was exceptionally cold. Record snowfalls blanketed posts as far south as Camp Gordon, Georgia, and Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina. Poor weather prevented outdoor training for weeks at a time. Added to the misery of shut-in inactivity were deadly outbreaks of Spanish influenza, measles, and other diseases. The army estimated that at least a quarter of its doughboys suffered from influenza at some time during the war. Influenza eventually killed 45,000 American soldiers, almost as many as were killed in action. Disease hindered or halted unit training as whole companies were quarantined to prevent the spread of the sickness.¹¹⁴ Forced indoors by the weather or sickness, junior leaders found it difficult to complete their on-the-job training with their units.

The mobilization of the American army was a mighty but flawed undertaking. The nation's general lack of military preparation and the press of time resulted in vast shortages of equipment and defective and incomplete plans for training the mass of new soldiers and officers. The OTC graduates were both victims and obedient minions of a training system that improperly prepared them for combat and then loosed them to spread ignorance among the draftee masses. While many motivated and well-intentioned young officers attempted to transcend the host of training problems that confronted them, their greatest obstacles were their own limitations and

inexperience. Perhaps these leaders hoped that their training deficiencies would be remedied in France. Unfortunately, the officers and NCOs would soon discover that the "rush, hurry and confusion" of war held as much sway in the AEF as it had stateside.

CHAPTER 6

“RUSH, HURRY AND CONFUSION” LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN FRANCE

Deploying to France did not end the army's problems with developing competent junior leaders. Officers and NCOs arriving overseas faced new sets of challenges and obstacles to their leadership development. The AEF's own unique training policies, uncertain tactical doctrine, and mistrust of the Allies often hindered efforts to create tactically and technically competent leaders. Dramatic changes in the military situation in 1918 further sidetracked and overshadowed unit and leader training. By the time the American units became involved in large-scale combat in the spring and summer of 1918, the AEF had made few breakthroughs in improving the quality of its junior leaders.

Ultimately, overcoming the leadership problem was the responsibility of General John J. Pershing. Within weeks of his landing in France, Pershing completed his estimate of the military situation and determined the operational and tactical path he intended the AEF to take. To Pershing, trench warfare served only to sap the will and offensive spirit of an army. He believed that reliance on the “false security” of trenches had bred so much complacency in the foreign armies that they were no longer willing or able to break the stalemate on the Western Front. “Black Jack” had no intention of allowing the AEF to succumb to “trench cancer.” His army would have the vigor and “American know-how” to bust through the defenses and destroy the enemy in the open.¹¹⁵ Pershing rejected the Allied assertion that improvements in artillery and deadly new technologies such as the machine gun had fundamentally changed the principles of warfare. In his August 1917 memorandum, “The General Principles Governing the Training of the Units of the American Expeditionary Forces,” Pershing established the basis for his “open warfare” doctrine and declared,

All instruction must contemplate the assumption of a vigorous offensive. This purpose will be emphasized in every phase of training until it becomes a settled habit of thought

... The rifle and bayonet are the principle weapons of the Infantry soldier. He will be trained to a high degree of skill as a marksman both on the target range and field firing. An aggressive spirit must be developed until the soldier feels himself, as a bayonet fighter, invincible in battle.¹¹⁶

The American version of a rifleman-led *attaque outrance* was as flawed as the French and German vision of war had been in 1914. As was the case with his European predecessors of 1914 and 1915, Pershing downplayed or misunderstood the marked advantage that machine guns, magazine rifles, barb wire-protected entrenchments, and high explosive-firing artillery gave to the defender. To the "Iron Commander," the offensive was simply the decisive form of war and his army would be bent to his will. Unfortunately, AEF's efforts at reconciling stateside training to Pershing's vision of "open warfare" ultimately clouded the issue of what technical and tactical skills junior leaders needed to master to succeed and survive on the battlefield.

Throughout 1917 Pershing faced an uphill battle to get his vision of "open warfare" accepted by the army as a whole. After studying the conditions on the Western Front the War Department concluded in August 1917 that the American army in France would most likely occupy a section of the line and fight the war from the trenches as the major combatants had done since the fall of 1914. The War Department's training guidance to the new divisions stated,

In all the military training of a division, under existing conditions, training for trench warfare is of paramount importance. Without neglect of the fundamentals of individual recruit instruction, every effort should be devoted to making all units from the squad and platoon upwards proficient in this kind of training. It is believed that in an intensive course of 16 weeks troops can be brought to a reasonable degree of efficiency through the squad, platoon, and company, making it possible with a minimum training in France for them to take their place on the line.¹¹⁷

Pershing constantly badgered the War Department to curtail stateside trench warfare training for both units and officer candidates. In a cable to the Army Chief of Staff, Pershing emphasized that he "strongly urge [the] absolute necessity of making open warfare [the] prime mission training in [the] United States and that training in the United States for trench warfare . . . be kept distinctly in [a] subordinate place." Black Jack proceeded to lecture that trench warfare was easy

to prepare for because it placed only “small demands” for initiative on leaders and soldiers and quickly assumed the character of a “carefully rehearsed routine.” He argued that,

Open warfare on the other hand demands initiative, resource, and decision upon [the] part of all commanders . . . and requires that all organizations be made into highly developed flexible teams capable of rapid maneuvering to meet swift changes in situation.¹¹⁸

Underpinning all of Pershing’s tactical beliefs was the assumption that the American soldier had a natural ability to out-shoot, out-move, and out-think his enemies.

Perhaps the greatest reason that Pershing failed to change the stateside training program was that he could offer no real alternative. The major problem with Pershing’s “open warfare” concept was that no one on his staff or in the War Department really understood exactly what the general meant by the term. It was easy for Pershing to proclaim that a maneuver by riflemen, properly using the ground, would break the trench stalemate; it was quite another thing for his staff to turn his pronouncements into a coherent and usable doctrine. The AEF GHQ exhorted line commanders to train for open warfare, but Pershing’s staff never established a workable and realistic training program or a set of battledrills for “open warfare.” The training and doctrine materials that the GHQ did issue were often too ambiguous and contradictory to be of much use. As Colonel George C. Marshall reported, “the mass of tactical instructions which were printed and issued were beyond the grasp of all concerned.”¹¹⁹ The *Infantry Drill Regulation (Provisional)*, which was intended by the GHQ to codify “open warfare,” was not printed until December 1918, over a month after the Armistice. The manual most used for tactical training, *Instruction on the Offensive Conduct of Small Units*, was, ironically, a translation of a French manual. Despite Pershing’s distaste for trench warfare and his disdain for Allied methods, a large number of the training manuals printed by the AEF Adjutant General were reprints of French and British publications, many on the subject of trench tactics.¹²⁰ Given the lack of focus and tactical “schizophrenia” at the highest levels of the AEF, it is no wonder that junior leaders were uncertain of what type of war they were training to fight. Within the AEF, open warfare

was not a doctrine; it was a dogma, a mere mantra to "marksmanship and maneuver" to be sung in the presence of Pershing, but always in the end, mysterious and elusive to the officers who had to execute it in combat.¹²¹

Whatever its theoretical merit, the poor training of the American soldier turned Pershing's vision of "open warfare" into little more than a flight of fancy. While Black Jack spoke of dominating the battlefield with superior American marksmanship, his Inspector General discovered that a number of the AEF's doughboys had never fired a rifle in training, and some did not even know how to load their weapons. A survey of marksmanship training in the II Corps in June 1918 revealed that between 30 to 40 percent of the unit's soldiers had little or no firing practice prior to arriving in France. Of the soldiers who had fired, most had only completed the reduced range "special course" of musketry.¹²² Despite Pershing's vision of how he intended the AEF to fight, his junior leaders did not have the basic tactical competencies and the doughboys themselves lacked the basic soldier skills necessary to make "open warfare" viable.

To compensate for what he saw as a flawed stateside unit training plan, Pershing demanded that all arriving divisions had to undergo a three month standardized train-up before they would be prepared for combat operations. The first month of training would be devoted to instructing battalions and below in small unit tactics with either the French or the British. In the second month units from the division would occupy a quiet sector of the front to learn trench warfare. Only in the last month of training would the division be reunited for large unit training in the "war of movement."¹²³ While the plan should have addressed the conflict between the divisions' stateside training and Pershing's vision of "open warfare," its flawed execution further hindered the creation of a standard doctrine for the AEF and led to more confusion for its junior leaders.

One of the main flaws in Pershing's training plan was its over-reliance on Allied assistance for its execution. The AEF GHQ had built the divisional training plan on the

assumption that the poor level of training of the units arriving in France precluded their immediate commitment to combat. The GHQ also realized that it lacked the instructors, equipment, and training areas to make the divisions combat ready. Pershing had to turn grudgingly to the Allies to accomplish the first two phases of his training plan. In doing so, he relinquished most of the control that the AEF GHQ had over the subject matter, intensity, and standardization of the training that the units received. The Americans feared, with much justification, that the French and British would use their influence over the attached units to undermine the AEF's emphasis on "open warfare." The French and British believed that training the Americans with Allied units, using Allied tactics, would add weight to their arguments for the amalgamation of AEF units into existing Allied divisions and corps.

Pershing was faced with a "Catch 22" dilemma. He feared the Allies' amalgamation agenda and disparaged their operational and tactical focus, yet had to surrender his units to them for training if he ever hoped to occupy his own sector of the front. Pershing believed the war would drag into 1919 and by that time the AEF's numbers and freshness would make it the only viable force in Europe.¹²⁴ Thus, the use of the Allies to train American units would be only a temporary marriage of convenience. In the third phase of divisional training the AEF GHQ would have time to purge its units of any "heretical" Allied doctrines and train them in "open warfare." Unfortunately, the American plans fail to account for the actions of the enemy. The German offensives of 1918 and the subsequent Allied counterattacks made shambles of the AEF training plan. Of the forty two divisions that reached France, thirty six arrived in the hectic period between March and October 1918. The ebb and flow of events on the battlefield disrupted the training of all of these units. None of the divisions that would see combat completed the full three months training plan. In almost all cases, time taken from the divisional instruction came from the second and third phase of the training plan.¹²⁵ The AEF's only hope of turning the "open warfare" concept into a true doctrine was to flesh out its tactics in

the regimental and brigade-size exercises planned for the third training phase. The omission of the third phase of the training plan meant that the majority of the AEF's junior leaders had little or no exposure to anything but trench warfare prior to entering combat.

Although the intent of the first two phases of the AEF training plan was to give the Americans some exposure to combat and to make them more proficient in small unit tactics, in reality the Allied training fell far short of these goals. The experiences of the 27th and 82nd Divisions, who trained with the British in May and June of 1918, illustrate the problems with the first phase training plan. The British broke both of the divisions into battalion or company sized units and widely scattered them around Flanders for training. Units of the 27th Division, for example, were quartered in a roughly rectangular area measuring fourteen by thirty miles centered on Saint Valery.¹²⁶ The Allies trained field artillery and machine gun battalions separate and independent of the infantry regiments that they would support in combat. This precluded combined arms training and prevented battalion, regimental and divisional commanders and staffs from learning how to control and supply their units as a whole. The actual training that the units received also left a lot to be desired. To ease supply problems, the British collected all the American weapons and reissued British small arms and machine guns. Most of the divisions' phase one training time was spent learning bayonet fighting, physical fitness, and the marksmanship and maintenance of the British weapons that, in the case of the 82nd Division, the doughboys would never use in combat.¹²⁷ A soldier of the 28th Division, who also trained with the British, noted that his training "consisted of six-mile hikes each day to a hillside drill field where we practiced throwing dummy hand grenades and listened to lectures." The doughboy also remembered that the British Lee-Enfield rifle he used in marksmanship training was so worn that its bore "looked like a shotgun," making rifle practice pointless.¹²⁸ Most importantly, the return to basic recruit-type training did little to address the needs of the American officers and NCOs. Contrary to the AEF's training goals, the Allies (especially the British) made almost no effort to

teach platoon, company, and battalion tactics, and the tactical training that was conducted was often limited to trench warfare.¹²⁹

The time the Americans spent in the trenches during phase two of the training plan also fell short of the AEF's expectations. Most of the divisions that occupied a sector of the trenches as part of their training did so in the slumbering French lines of the Vosges area. Pershing intended the phase two tour in the trenches to "harden and accustom" his soldiers "to all sorts of fire and make veterans of the individuals."¹³⁰ Unfortunately, the Vosges sector was too quiet to provide much practical combat experience for the Americans. For nearly two years a tacit truce between the French and Germans had kept the sector relatively calm. The sector was so quiet that Lieutenant W. A. Sirmon recalled that he shot quail and gathered plums and apples in no-man's land.¹³¹ Neither the French nor the Germans were particularly enthusiastic at having the raw and rambunctious Americans disturbing the region's "live and let live system." As a soldier from the 35th Division contemptuously noted, "This ain't a war. The Frogs and Krauts got it fixed up between 'em to spend their vacations where their ain't nothin' to bother 'em but scenery."¹³² The French officers assigned to the American units did everything within their power to control and divert the aggressiveness of the newcomers. In the end, the doughboys' combat experience in the sector amounted to little more than exposure to German shell and sniper fire and very infrequent trench raids. As was the case with the phase one instruction, there was little training in the trenches to prepare the junior officers for their later ordeal in combat. One Doughboy laconically noted in 1919, "The training in the Vosges did not prove of great value to the men in the Argonne battle."¹³³

The Americans' time in the trenches did bring to light problems with the AEF's training and leadership. After the doughboys broke the "live and let live" system in the quiet sectors, casualties began to mount. While serving on the French front the 82nd Division lost 44 men killed in action and another 327 wounded. Many of these casualties can be traced back to the

lack of training of both officers and men. Seventeen of the 44 soldiers killed were lost in a single incident after a German shell slammed into an overcrowded trench. The War Department's 1917 *Field Service Pocket Book* had warned officers of the need to disperse their soldiers in the trenches for "economizing personnel" and "minimizing the effects of the enemy's artillery fire."¹³⁴ This incident highlights the fact that by this late date the officers in this unit had yet to even master trench warfare, not to mention "open warfare." Most of the division's wounded resulted from exposure to gas. More thorough chemical warfare training and better supervision by their officers could have prevented the injury of these soldiers.¹³⁵ As with many other AEF units, the 82nd Division left its front line service with the Allies with little to show for the casualties or the experience. When the 82nd pulled out of the Vosges for its combat debut during the St. Mihiel offensive, the division's officers had received almost no realistic training to improve their tactical competency.

Taken as a whole the AEF's phase one and two divisional training plan was far from a resounding success. While some organizations, notably machine gun and artillery units, profited from training with the Allies, infantry instruction fell short of the GHQ's expectations. Since infantry training with the Allies generally centered on basic skills at the company level and below, senior American commanders had no opportunity to learn and practice how to maneuver, supply and fight at regimental level and above. Thus, with the disruptions caused by the German offensives of 1918, most division and brigade commanders only had one to three weeks to exercise real control over their recombined units before they entered combat. The dispersal of units for training created problems with combined arms coordination that would later plague the AEF's operations. The two training periods had given machine gunners and artillerymen vital training in the technical aspects of their duties but failed to train commanders in how their units fought with the infantry.¹³⁶ The confusion was as great at the lower levels. Company officers and NCOs were pulled three ways. Should they try to train their units to fight as they had learned

in the States, follow the Allied tactics taught during phase one and two of overseas training, or attempt to train for the half-understood "open warfare?" The young leaders, already hamstrung by their lack of knowledge and experience, muddled through the best they could and the "blind leading the blind" syndrome continued to hold sway in the AEF.

The training of American units by the Allies was also to have other long-term implications for the combat readiness of the AEF and for the professional development of many of its junior leaders. As previously noted, Pershing and his staff had grave reservations about using the Allies to train AEF units. It is worth quoting at length from a memorandum from the G-5 (Training), Harold Fiske, to the AEF Chief of Staff to illustrate GHQ's fears of Allied training in general, and specifically its negative influence on the AEF's junior officers after several months of phase one and two training. In July 1918 Fiske wrote,

Secret memoranda of the French G.H.Q., dated May 1 and June 19, make it clear to the French commanders...that they must control the instruction of American regiments training with French divisions and impregnate the American units with French methods and doctrine. . . .

American units are scattered from the North Sea to Switzerland. Proper inspection and coordination of their training from these headquarters is, therefore, extraordinarily difficult. Some are tactically under the French and some under the British. Many are closely affiliated with decimated French and British divisions.

The offensive spirit of the French and British has largely disappeared as result of their severe losses. Close association with beaten forces lowers the morale of the best troops. *Our young officers and men are prone to take the tone and tactics of those with whom they are associated, and whatever they are now learning what is false or unsuited for us will be hard to eradicate later.*

. . . . The junior officers of both allied services, with whom our junior officers are most closely associated, are not professional soldiers, know little of the general characteristics of war, and their experience is almost entirely limited to the special phase of the war in the trenches.

Neither the French nor the British believe in our ability to train men or in the value of the methods adopted by us. . . . Distrusting our methods as they do, both the French and the British find many means of blocking our wishes and instructions. What we build up, they to a certain extent pull down. There is consequently much friction, much loss of motion, and much valuable time wasted.

The tutelage of the French and British has hindered the development of responsibility and self-reliance upon the part of our officers of all grades. All our commanders from the division down have constantly at their elbows an Englishman or Frenchman who, when any difficulty arises, immediately offers a solution. A great fraction of our officers have consequently permitted themselves to lean very largely upon their tutors with a resultant loss of initiative and sense of responsibility. The assistance of

our Allies has become not an asset but a serious handicap in the training of our troops . . . An American army can not be made by Frenchmen or Englishmen.¹³⁷ (emphasis mine)

To combat the "bad influence" of Allied soldiers and minimize the "damage" caused by Allied training, Fiske had vigorously petitioned Pershing to establish an independent American schools system. Both men believed that the AEF schools would correct the doughboys' glaring training deficiencies, prepare junior and senior leaders for modern warfare, and combat the "defensive-mindedness" of the Allies. These schools would continue to use Allied instructors for technical training but, in theory, would employ American "open warfare" doctrine for tactical training. The doughboys had to be shielded from taking the "tone and tactics" of the Allies at all cost. Once the Americans had established their own training areas and occupied their own section of the line, Fiske intended to purge the AEF's military education centers of all "counterproductive" Allied influences. This was accomplished in August 1918 with Pershing's order removing all French and British instructors from the American army's schools and units.¹³⁸

Pershing and Fiske's rationale for the AEF schools system was sound but the operation and administration of the system had an unintended detrimental impact on the army's junior leadership. The schools system became an ever-expanding bureaucracy with an insatiable demand for instructors and students. The limited information gained in the schools was off-set by the fact that the instruction stripped line officers from their units for long periods of time during critical points of platoon and company cohesion-building.

The AEF may have been able to ameliorate some of the effects of poor leader training if it would have concentrated on building strong cohesive small units. While tactical and technical competence is the foundation of combat leadership, soldiers are (and were) willing to overlook flaws in their officers and NCOs if the leaders are trying to learn and are taking an active interest in the welfare of their men. A symbiotic relationship between the leader and the led tends to weld units together. Military analysts such as Ardent du Picq, S. L. A. Marshall, Martin Van Creveld, and William H. Henderson have all highlighted the relationship between unit cohesion

and combat effectiveness on the battlefield. Henderson noted that leadership was one of the greatest determiners as to how well a unit "hung together" and fought. He argued,

Men in danger become acutely aware of the qualities of their leaders. They desire leadership so their immediate needs can be met and their anxieties controlled. In this regard, well-trained and respected company grade officers and sergeants relay a sense of competence and security to their soldiers and, if successful over a period of time, gain a degree of influence and control over members of their units.

Henderson stressed the need for leaders to establish "personal, empathic, and continuing face-to-face contact with all soldiers in the unit" to build and maintain cohesion.¹³⁹ This concept was not alien to the army of 1917. The training manuals of the time were replete with admonishments for young leaders to "know your men and look after their welfare." Lincoln Andrews wrote in 1916, "A good leader is as one with his men, he speaks their language, he shares their blessings and their hardships, he is jealous of their name, he defends their sensibilities and their rights in the larger organization, in fact he is the recognized guardian of their welfare."¹⁴⁰ The premise was that the leader had to be around their units to build this relationship and gain their soldiers' confidence. The AEF was never able to solve the crucial problem of how to simultaneously train its individual soldiers, junior leaders, staffs, and units, without sacrificing the quality of instruction or unit cohesion.

The turmoil caused by the War Department's levy policies had undermined small unit cohesion in American divisions. In many cases soldiers joined their units only weeks or days before they departed for France. The removal of officers and NCOs to fill administrative jobs and serve as cadres for other units further exacerbated the problem. An infantryman in the 33rd Division recalled that his company had five different commanders during its eighteen months of service.¹⁴¹ Given this turmoil, the AEF needed to stabilize its small units to give its junior leaders time to hone their leadership skills and to integrate the members of their units into a close knit organization. Unfortunately, the AEF's draconian schools quota system yanked the leaders from these evolving platoons and companies while the units were training with the Allies and

serving in the quiet trench sectors. Generally, a young captain or lieutenant in the AEF could expect to attend at least one school during his service in France and lose approximately one to two months of time with his soldiers. After arriving in France, First Lieutenant C. E. Crane was assigned to the 55th Artillery Regiment on 18 April 1918. Crane spent all of June and half of August 1918 in various signal and artillery schools. When he went into action with his unit for the first time on 28 August, he had had less than three months time to build a command relationship with his soldiers.¹⁴² As previously noted the army's system for training officers and NCOs devoted little attention to instilling leadership principles in the soldiers. The training failed to impart to the young leaders how to motivate, manage, and care for their troops. The interpersonal leadership skills that were not learned in training had to be obtained through trial and error by the leaders in their units. All too often, attendance at AEF schools prevented many junior leaders from gaining the "hands on" leadership experience that bonds units together.

The ironclad quota system even removed officers from units going into combat. George Marshall decried the fact that the green divisions bound for the Meuse Argonne Offensive were "absolutely scalped" of their officers "in order that the next class at Langres might start on scheduled time."¹⁴³ John Madden, an infantry lieutenant in the 89th Division, was pulled out of his platoon in the midst of the Argonne battle to attend a ten-day rifle and grenade school.¹⁴⁴ To fill his unit's quota one officer attended three different machine gun courses. He admitted that he "learned absolutely nothing new in the last two schools," and that he was sent from the line for the third course at a time "when the regiment needed officers badly."¹⁴⁵ Shortly after the war some of the AEF's senior leaders even commented on the negative effect that the schools system had on unit cohesion and professional development. The commander of the 7th Division, Major General Edmund Wittenmyer, commented during the Lewis Board proceedings,

Every organization after its arrival in France was to a great extent disorganized by the system of instruction adopted by the G.H.Q., in constantly withdrawing officers and noncommissioned officers to send them to school; thus leaving the organizations entirely without their complement of instructors. While these officers and noncommissioned

officers were benefited. . . the organization itself lost by their absence more than was gained by the individuals that attended the schools. . . . The action of superior authorities in taking away large numbers of officers of all grades, and enlisted men, to attend school and receive instruction absolutely destroyed all results in the way of instruction in the companies and battalions, and I consider these two organizations to be the very best schools for both soldiers and junior officers.¹⁴⁶

The schools were not only detrimental to unit cohesion and training, they also fell short of their goal of increasing professional competence in the AEF. Most of the AEF schools concentrated on giving the students technical knowledge of the weapons that had emerged during the war. The courses emphasized rote memorization of detailed technical data. Unfortunately, the concentration on minutiae often came at the expense of teaching the students how to employ the weapons tactically. The Army Machine Gun School, for example, taught "the mechanical operations of various types of machine guns; practice in known distance machine gun firing; calculations for and practice in various methods of indirect machine gun fire; a certain amount of machine gun tactics; pistol and grenade practice."¹⁴⁷ It was obvious from the Machine Gun School report that giving the students "a certain amount" of tactical knowledge was not the thrust of the course. The schools failed to find the balance between the "technician and the tactician" that was so desperately needed in the AEF's junior leaders.

The little tactical training that was done in the schools may have only further confused and exasperated the student leaders. Despite the GHQ's official demand that the doughboys be trained for a war of maneuver, much of the tactical instruction in the AEF's schools continued to stress trench warfare.¹⁴⁸ Thus the schools missed a golden opportunity to bring order and uniformity to the AEF's chaotic tactical doctrine. In many cases the training was simply overdone. As one infantry officer commented,

Three weeks courses were given in courses that any reasonable man ought to learn in three days. If he couldn't learn grenade throwing, for instance, in three days, he ought not be an officer. . . . Somebody's obsession regarding the necessity for schools kept about 50% of officers away from their units all the time, when they ought to have been giving their time to their men.¹⁴⁹

The mere existence of the AEF schools tended to worsen the army's problem of building cohesive units commanded by competent leaders. The GHQ not only pushed for the rapid expansion of its own central AEF schools, but also encouraged the formation of corps and divisional schools. The phenomenal growth of the training courses led one disgusted officer to quip, "The Germans begin a great offensive, and we retaliate by starting another school."¹⁵⁰ This proliferation of educational institutions demanded a large cadre of instructors and administrative personnel. Once established, the schools filled their cadres by retaining graduating students as instructors. This practice deprived small units of their semi-experienced leadership and damaged unit cohesion by imposing unfamiliar and inexperienced replacement leaders on their soldiers. The system also encouraged mediocrity in both the students and instructors of the courses. As one infantry lieutenant commented, "Officers feared to make good grades in school because of the danger of becoming an instructor." Of his time at the Engineer School another officer noted, "The instructors were 2nd Lts, who had finished the previous course. It was not their fault that they didn't know [the material], but it was a joke."¹⁵¹ The "blind leading the blind" syndrome again reared its ugly head. To prevent the potential loss of their best leaders, some senior commanders opted to send their less talented officers and NCOs to fill their unit's quotas. This practice further eroded the quality of instruction in the AEF's schools, prevented good officers from obtaining some technical training, and did nothing to resolve the overall loss of junior leaders in the units.¹⁵²

Taken as a whole, the AEF's attempts to prepare its junior leaders for combat floundered in the wake of an uncertain tactical doctrine, Allied machinations, German operations, and its own misguided training policies. Pershing's "open warfare" rhetoric was never matched with any doctrinal reality. The resulting confusion wasted valuable training time in France and ultimately left the AEF's junior leaders unsure of their duties on the battlefield. Pershing's efforts to correct the training deficiencies that his divisions brought with them from the United

States unintentionally damaged unit cohesion in the AEF. The AEF's divisional training plans did little to improve the tactical competency of its units and were increasingly overtaken by the events of 1918. The AEF's elaborate schools system offered scant improvements in the tactical competency of the army's leadership at the cost of great disruptions to the "team building" of its small units. The failure of the AEF's training plan left its junior leaders with no other option than to muddle through combat as best as they could. The junior officers and NCOs were forced to learn about war through a more unforgiving education: the hard knocks school of personal experience.

CHAPTER 7

"THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS" LEADER COMPETENCY ON THE BATTLEFIELD

French Marshal Ferdinand Foch once advised young officers, "There is no studying on the battlefield. It is simply a case of doing what is possible, to make use of what one knows and, in order to make a little possible, one must know much."¹⁵³ Junior leaders of the Napoleonic and American Civil War periods had been little more than formation dressers whose combat leadership was limited to using their personal courage, inspiration, or intimidation to keep their units moving forward against the enemy. These leaders operated within the vision and direct control of their regimental and brigade commanders. Their technical knowledge needed only to encompass a single weapons system and their tactical knowledge could be limited to formation and firing drills. Combat in the first two decades of the twentieth century demonstrated that these previous notions and expectations of junior leadership were obsolete.

The nature of the World War I battlefield and the deadliness of new weapons technology demanded leaders who were competent with the operation and employment of a wide range of organic and supporting weapons. Whereas a company commander in the Civil War needed only to understand the use of a rifled musket, his World War I counterpart had to grasp how to employ magazine rifles, light machine guns, automatic rifles, hand grenades, rifle grenades, and light 37mm guns. The doughboy leaders also had to know how to coordinate his unit's operations with heavy machine guns, mortars, artillery, and tanks. The increased size of the armies and battlefield and the lack of a reliable system for communicating orders to scattered frontline units meant that senior officers could no longer exercise direct command in combat. The grand scale and diffused character of battle now required junior leaders who were able to exercise individual initiative and decision making to deal with the unforeseen events of combat. Unfortunately, nothing in the training and experiences of the AEF's company level officers and NCOs had prepared them to face the tactical challenges of the battlefield or to exercise decentralized

leadership. Once in combat, this failure to properly train and develop junior leaders resulted in a deterioration in the relationship between company and field grade officers, an drain in junior leadership due to high losses, a further erosion in small unit cohesion, and unnecessary battle casualties.

Combat in the First World War placed an increased demand on the leadership, tactical knowledge, and initiative of company level officers and NCOs. Despite this trend, the inexperience and lack of training of the AEF's junior leaders led senior American officers to attempt to retain tactical control and decision making at battalion and regimental level. This tendency toward micro-management embittered junior officers and further eroded their effectiveness as combat leaders.

In his comparative study of the command, training, and tactical systems of the German and British armies in World War I, Martin Samuels argued that the reason for the Germans' tactical success stemmed from their reliance on decentralized command and execution in combat. The Germans viewed war as the most chaotic and uncertain of human endeavors. The only way to deal with the "fog and friction" of the battlefield was to train junior leaders to exercise independent decision making and allow them the latitude to determine the best means of accomplishing their assigned missions. The British, on the other hand, saw combat as a structured event following rational and predictable patterns. All that was required for success on the battlefield was obedience to the plan established by the higher headquarters. "Fog and friction" was created by the junior leaders' failure to carry out the orders of their superiors.¹⁵⁴ Samuels' work is noteworthy because of the interesting similarities in the attitudes and assumptions of American and British senior officers. Like the British, the Americans attempted to impose centralized "restrictive control" on their combat operations. In both cases the "restrictive control" imposed by the detailed and prohibitive orders of the higher headquarters sapped the initiative of the junior officers and undercut their position as leaders.

Throughout the war American soldiers were indoctrinated that unquestioning adherence to the orders of their superiors was their primary duty. This hallowed stricture was expounded in all the major American doctrinal publications. The very first line of the *Army Regulations* stated, "All persons in the military service are required to obey strictly and to execute promptly the lawful orders of their superiors."¹⁵⁵ The *Field Service Regulations* ordained, "A military order is the expression of the will of a chief conveyed to a subordinate. However informally expressed, military orders must be loyally and promptly obeyed."¹⁵⁶ This demand for conformity was best expressed in the *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates*. The first chapter of the manual stated,

Obedience is the first and last duty of a soldier. It is the foundation upon which all military efficiency is built. . . . Obey strictly and execute promptly the lawful orders of your superiors. It is enough to know that the person giving the order, whether he be an officer, a noncommissioned officer, or a private acting as such is your lawful superior. You may not like him, you may not respect him, but you must respect his position and authority, and reflect honor on yourself and your profession by yielding to all superiors that complete and unhesitating obedience which is the pleasure as well as the duty of every soldier. Orders must be strictly carried out. It is not sufficient to comply with only that part which suits you or which involves no work, danger, or hardship. *Nor is it proper or permissible, when you are ordered to do a thing in a certain way or to accomplish a work in a definitely prescribed manner, for you to obtain the same results by other methods.* Obedience must be prompt and unquestioning.¹⁵⁷ (emphasis mine)

If there were any remaining questions regarding the expectations of the AEF's senior leaders of their officers and men, they were answered by Pershing himself. In October 1917 and again in April 1918 Pershing proclaimed,

The standards of the American army will be those of West Point. The rigid attention, upright bearing, attention to detail, uncomplaining obedience to instructions required of a cadet will be required of every officer and soldier in our armies in France. Failure to attain such discipline will be treated as a lack of capacity on the part of a commander to create in the subordinate that intensity of purpose and willingness to accept hardships which are necessary to success in battle.¹⁵⁸

The message was clear to the junior leaders: carry out your instructions without questioning the perceptions, assumptions, or rationale of your superiors. The message was equally clear to the senior officers; failure of their subordinates to carry out their missions was a direct reflection on

the senior's capacity of command. While Pershing had earlier stated that he wanted junior leaders able to take initiative on the battlefield, the command climate that he and his senior leaders created in the AEF were at odds with that desire. Junior leaders were frequently told not only what to do, but how to do it by their superiors. Senior leaders lambasted the company-level officers and NCOs for their lack of ingenuity and drive, yet refused to see their own responsibility for the problem.

Fear and careerism motivated many senior officers to keep their subordinates well under thumb. Pershing's threats of relief for "lack of capacity" were not taken lightly by senior officers. Knowing the weaknesses of his officer corps, Pershing ruthlessly worked to remove any commander failing to achieve results or not meeting his standard of aggressiveness. On 16 November 1917 Pershing ordered the "examination of officers who have demonstrated their unfitness." General Orders 62 directed that "Company, battalion, and regimental commanders will observe closely the suitability and fitness of provisional and temporary officers under their commands and will report promptly to the division or department commander any officer who is not satisfactory for continuance in the service."¹⁵⁹ Pershing's "weeding out" was not limited to junior or reserve officers. During the Meuse-Argonne offensive, Pershing relieved four brigade and three division commanders. On 12 October 1918, he also removed Lieutenant General George Cameron from command of the V Corps.

Officers failing to meet (or appearing to fail) Pershing's standards were sent to the Casual Officers Depot and Reclassification Center in Blois, France, to appear before a reclassification or efficiency board. The depot reclassified 1,101 officers (mostly company grade) considered untrained, unfit or unsuited for their assignments before it ceased operations in February 1919. A large number of junior artillery officers, for example, were reclassified because of their inability to master the technical aspects of their duties or because of their poor map reading and mathematical skills.¹⁶⁰ The Blois officer efficiency board evaluated an

additional 270 field grade officers for their suitability for continued command. Of these officers, thirty nine were returned to combat duty; forty eight were discharged; thirty five were sent back to the United States; twelve were demoted, and the remainder were assigned to non-combat duty within the Service of Supply.¹⁶¹ Regardless of the board's findings, being sent to Blois was a career-ending experience for most Regular officers. While Pershing's actions certainly removed many incompetent officers, they also placed a severe emotional strain on many of his leaders. This fear of removal motivated many commanders to keep their subordinates firmly "in line" and limit any activities that might reflect badly on the commander. With the specter of Blois never far from their minds, regimental and higher commanders seldom allowed their subordinates the latitude to make, and more importantly, to learn from their mistakes prior to going into combat.

Fear of relief and lack of confidence in their junior leaders encouraged micro-management by senior officers. As an officer in the Inspector General's office later noted, "Officers commenced to exhibit a degree of fear and apprehension lest some unavoidable event, something which they could not control, might operate to ruin their careers."¹⁶² Some officers went as far as preventing their more talented junior leaders from attending needed technical schools because of "the danger to themselves of being relieved of command for some error made by the less efficient officers."¹⁶³ In an effort to limit things "they could not control" senior officers resorted to even more proscriptive and detailed orders for their subordinates to follow to the letter. Lieutenant Colonel George Marshall, the operations officer for the 1st Division, spent much of March 1918 writing detailed plans for trench raids to be carried out by a handful of the division's platoons. To ensure the success of these small 20 man raids, the patrols were even accompanied by experienced staff officers and overseen by the division commander.¹⁶⁴ While senior AEF leaders understandably wanted these early American operations to succeed, they set a pattern for centralized command and control that haunted and hindered the AEF's operations throughout the remainder of the war.

Although junior officers were often cognizant of their own shortcomings and lack of experience, they generally resented the micro-management of their superiors. The company grade officers argued that the direct involvement of senior officers in the command and administration of their companies diminished their authority and leadership within their units. An infantry captain decried what he saw as "interference by officers higher than Company Commanders in those problems of responsibility and duty of the Company Commander, with the result that Company Commanders were often mere figureheads."¹⁶⁵ The senior officers seemed to justify their micro-management on the grounds that junior leaders could not be trusted to carry out important assignments without their close supervision. This perceived need to regulate junior officers further stressed already overburdened senior commanders and staffs and also created command climates where initiative and independent decision-making were not prized or encouraged. As a second lieutenant noted shortly after the war,

There are too many instances of Colonels doing Platoon Leader's work. There are too many lieutenants doing the work of sergeants. There is a tendency on the part of the General Staff itself to direct the simplest movements of small units in detail instead of giving a general outline in orders and leaving the details to be worked out by those who are commissioned for that purpose.¹⁶⁶

The failure of the AEF's "directive control" system thus created a vacuum of battlefield leadership where junior leaders often blindly obeyed orders despite obvious changes in the situation or the possibility of tactical opportunity. Given their fears of being relieved and their dismissive attitudes toward company grade officers it is not surprising that senior officers did little to encourage independent thought and initiative in their junior leaders. The AEF's "directive control" system had already made leaders at all levels very hesitant to deviate from their instructions. Unfortunately, no matter how much the senior officers tried to dictate "restrictive control" in combat, the changed nature of the battlefield frustrated their efforts. The increased tempo of American operations in the summer and fall of 1918 prevented senior officers from exercising the direct planning and supervision of small unit actions that characterized the

1st Division's early combats. Of his regiment's action in the Argonne, the 42nd Division's Lieutenant Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan recalled, "There were green company commanders with the companies There were times when I had to march at the head of the companies to get them forward. . . [the] new men needed some visible symbol of authority."¹⁶⁷ Despite Donovan's efforts, the size and spread of his companies and the primitive state of his communications limited the span of his personal control. The junior officers' training and indoctrination had not prepared them to operate outside their strict instructions or seize the initiative when terrain, enemy action, or other unforeseen eventualities invalidated their last orders. After his encounter with the Americans in September 1918, a German commander noted,

The [American] leadership was altogether clumsy . . . most of them do not possess the qualifications necessary of leadership. It was impossible to overlook the embarrassment displayed by the Americans as soon as their initial aims were achieved. They helplessly faced their new positions, unable to take any advantage of them Favorable opportunities to overtake and encircle us were allowed by them to go by. . . . As soon as the infantry, charging straight ahead, had achieved its goals, leaders, as well as the rank and file, were nonplused.¹⁶⁸

The AEF's "top down" command structure and prewar Regular Army attitudes often encouraged senior leaders to take a directive, dismissive, and patronizing tone toward their junior leaders. When coupled with their micro-management, the field grade officers' attitudes increasingly alienated junior officers and further stifled their professional development. With the exception of John O'Ryan, all of the AEF's division commanders, and the majority of its brigade and regimental commanders, were regular officers with little to no experience of dealing with citizen soldiers. The Regulars labeled the newly commissioned leaders "provisional," "temporary," or "emergency" officers to emphasize the new officers' inferior and fleeting status. The Regulars often saw the "temporary officers" as nothing more than an undisciplined bunch of amateurs with no understanding of military matters or the proper "Army way" to accomplish tasks.¹⁶⁹ Along with the well established disdain of "temporary officers" came a corrosive lack of trust which frequently ate away at the bonds of mutual respect that hold units together in combat.

Voicing a sentiment shared by many senior officers, the AEF Inspector General placed the fault for much of the American army's problems on the lack of responsibility and initiative on the part of the junior officers.¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the AEF's senior leaders failed to see their own culpability in their subordinates' failures.

The junior officers bristled at the patronizing attitudes of their superiors. An infantry captain lamented, "I have noticed that in most places the junior officers, especially Reserve and National Guard officers, have been treated more as dishonorable and dishonest men. . . and not treated as officers should be treated."¹⁷¹ Another captain noted the tendency of senior leaders to treat their subordinates "as if they were irresponsible and had no idea of right and wrong."¹⁷² While the senior leaders' reservations about their subordinates' competency were well founded, their attitudes and open criticism undermined the junior leaders' authority and self-confidence. The tendency of the AEF's senior leadership to micro-manage junior officers may have diverted attention away from the subordinates' professional development. In military training, mistakes must be made if they are to be corrected. By their actions and attitudes, senior officers ultimately helped to ensure that junior leader incompetence became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

While the senior officers often distrusted the abilities of their subordinates, the AEF's junior leaders frequently held equally low opinions of their superiors. The AEF's captains and lieutenants were quick to discern that the majority of the army's colonels and generals had no more experience with modern warfare than did they. Prior to America's entry into the war, no serving officer had experience commanding a division or higher unit, and few had commanded anything larger than a company. Like their subordinates, the senior leadership had virtually no experience with massed artillery, machine guns, tanks, or the other technological changes effecting the battlefield. The junior leaders chafed under what they considered the field grade officers' hypocritical criticisms of their competency. The junior officers countered contempt with contempt and lashed their superiors with telling accusations. One young officer blasted the "lack

of experience and common sense in the handling of large bodies of troops by some higher officers," while another bluntly wrote, "the field officers and many general officers did not understand their work." An infantry lieutenant accused, "In battle, General and Field Officers remained far to the rear, but after the battle they came and bitterly criticize[d] the work of the combatants, when if the higher officers had been in their proper places they could have personally directed the fighting."¹⁷³

The junior officers' most striking criticism was that their superiors often lacked basic command skills and were out of touch with the realities of modern warfare. In the Morale Branch survey a field artillery officer commented, "Many Commanding Officers were ignorant as to what their organizations were capable of doing in action. That is they expected the impossible at times and did not take advantage of things they could do at times."¹⁷⁴ These charges had some merit. In an examination given by the II Corps Headquarters to a mixed group of field grade officers immediately after the war, only 5 out of 57 leaders tested could accurately locate map coordinates. The II Corps testing also revealed that "the vast majority of field officers could not read a map, could rarely make a sketch, could not write a clear, concise message, and had small conception of the general tactical principles employed in offensive movements."¹⁷⁵

The young leaders were also critical of their superiors' abilities to motivate and lead citizen soldiers. Company officers accused their superiors of "Prussianism," a haughty and arrogant disregard for American soldiers and democratic ideas caused by the assumed superiority of the senior officer's worth, prestige, and position. One junior officer complained, "Regular officers failed in many cases to get the best work out of the new men, because they treated them like niggers. No man keeps his self-respect when bullied, ragged and brow-beaten."¹⁷⁶ The junior officers, who were in many cases well-educated business or professional men, were not used to being treated in a patronizing or brash manner. Dissatisfied with his brigade commander's lack of tact and leadership, one officer in the 82nd Division ruefully noted,

The General has ridden us so constantly and consistently about picayunish details that he has his entire staff demoralized. I appreciate the difference between disciplinary reprimand and a cursing out. The General isn't careful [about] which he uses these days.¹⁷⁷

The AEF possessed an officer corps at war with itself. More importantly, the rivalry between senior and junior officers broke down the mutual trust, respect, and confidence that are the cornerstones of unit cohesion. This atmosphere of mistrust not only soured relations between field and company grade officers, it also filtered down through the ranks, eroding the enlisted soldiers' faith and confidence in their leaders. This pervasive climate of distrust further damaged the AEF's unit cohesion and combat effectiveness.

The cumulative effects of the army's failure to train and develop its junior leaders were revealed by the AEF's first major combat actions in the spring and summer of 1918. Fighting around Cantigny (20-32 May) and Soissons (18-22 July) demonstrated that even in divisions with the most time and training in France (the 1st, 2nd, 42nd, and 26th Divisions) the junior leaders often lacked basic tactical skills. Throughout the war the AEF would be plagued by officers and NCOs unable to read a map or execute simple fire and maneuver drills. During the Aisne-Marne Offensive an artillery private in the 26th Division stumbled upon the results of a junior officer's tactical ineptitude,

Turning back across the fields I passed between groups of dead Americans lying in short windrows as they had been mowed down by the machine guns from the woods. Wave after wave had evidently assaulted from the ditches along the road before the survivors had obtained a foothold in the woods.¹⁷⁸

Private Berch Ford, a veteran of the 1st Division's 16th Infantry, recalled that during the Soissons drive the inability of his lieutenant to read a map resulted in his platoon being lost in "no-man's land" far in advance of the rest of his unit. The platoon was discovered by the Germans and severely pounded by artillery. The situation would have become critical had not a long service Regular Army NCO (a very rare commodity in the AEF) taken charge of the platoon and moved

it to safety.¹⁷⁹ The message log of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division during the Soissons battle further highlights the confusion caused by unskilled officers.

From C.O. 2nd Bn. 26th Inf. To: C.O. 26th Inf.

Right front line company 28th Inf. has just arrived at my P.C. [command post]. *It is lost.* Company commander has made no reconnaissance . . . and his guides do not know where to take him.

From 2nd BDE

Lt. Graham with 3 platoons of L Co., 26th [Inf.] Lost around BDE P.C.

Lt. Brouston reports with 1 platoon of D Co. 28th Inf. Claims Major Roxell ordered him to go towards artillery firing. No further orders. (Brigade commander is of the opinion that this officer is scared)

Lt. Sorenson D Co. 28th [Inf.] with his company outside of Brigade P.C. absolutely lost. Has no maps.

Adjutant reported whole 1st Bn. 28th [Inf.] lost in woods LA FOSSE TRUE. They do not know what to do or where to go.¹⁸⁰

The confused wanderings of the 2nd Brigade's two regiments broke the tempo of the Division's attack and resulted in a number of casualties as these units blundered into areas swept by the enemy's machine guns.

These first actions also uncovered that the junior leaders of the AEF's most trained units were woefully ignorant on how to employ supporting weapons and in using terrain and proper formations and tactics to minimize casualties and overcome enemy resistance. The AEF's "Notes on Recent Operations" from the Soissons fighting noted that platoon leaders and company commanders frequently used formations that severely limited their command and control and nullified any attempt to mass firepower or shock effects. Infantry and machine gun company commanders did not understand how to coordinate their movements and fires to cover the American's advance and suppress the enemy. The report noted that when the infantry attacked, "little use was made of machine guns to assist the attacking troops getting forward" and that controlled rifle and supporting fires "would have resulted in far less casualties."¹⁸¹

The AEF seems to have realized that if their most trained and experienced units were having such fundamental leadership problems, then the less trained divisions that arrived in the spring and summer of 1918 would have even greater problems in battle. This fear seemed to be justified by the early actions of the newly arrived divisions. The 30th Division arrived in France in May 1918 and fought its first action with the British during the Ypres-Lys Operation of August 1918. In after action reports from the battle, division officers noted,

The natural tendency of men seems to be to rush . . . (machine gun) nests in frontal attacks instead of using a flanking or enveloping movement. . . . Small unit leadership: next to lack of liaison the most glaring defect. Small unit leaders wait to be told how to do every little thing and use little or no initiative of their own. Do not assume enough responsibility. In all training of men, they have been too dependent on officers telling them not only what to do but how to do it . . . Platoon leaders have not had instruction and almost no practice in the actual use of maps and aerial photos.¹⁸²

These poor leadership indicators were a stark warning of things to come.

While the "Note on Recent Operation" and divisional after actions reports were a laudable attempt to capture the "lessons learned" from past actions, the AEF did not have enough time and "know how" to fix its leadership deficiencies before its major operations at Saint Mihiel and the Meuse Argonne. The junior leaders' insufficient training in land navigation, tactical movement, and small unit decision making, that had been brought to light in the AEF's early battles, would reappear with depressing frequency in its later actions. Without appropriate training and experience to draw upon, the junior leaders had to learn about combat from the costly school of hard knocks. An infantry battalion commander commented that since his leaders lacked skills and knowledge prior to combat, the "officers. . . must learn their business from day to day at the expense of their trade in human beings. The latter must bear the cost of this learning and pay the price of every experiment in the process."¹⁸³

The major "experiment in the process" for most company level leaders was learning how to command and control their units in attacks across varied terrain. Pershing intended the AEF to be an offensive arm and the vast majority of its operations were both tactically and operationally

offensive in nature. Most of the AEF's battles would be fought outside of the trench lines that had characterized the first three years of the war, but the preponderance of junior leader training had been devoted to trench warfare. With the GHQ's failure to turn Pershing's "open warfare" concept into a usable doctrine and the senior American commander's emphasis on "restrictive control," the small unit leaders found themselves largely unprepared for the tactical challenges they faced at Saint Mihiel and the Meuse Argonne. With nothing to guide them except the proscriptive and preemptory orders of their superiors, the American junior officers often led their soldiers in frontal attacks carried out in dense successive lines of infantry. Like the legendary "Russian steamroller," the attacks simply buried the defending Germans under the weight of American bodies.

The junior officer's predilection for frontal "steamroller" tactics was also encouraged by the very organization of American combat units. Pershing's massive 27,000 man "square" divisions maximized senior leadership while giving the units the ability to "take punishment." Unfortunately, the manpower-bloated structure of the division filtered all the way down to its component platoons. The prewar table of organization for an infantry company was three officers and 108 enlisted men.¹⁸⁴ During the war the infantry company strength ballooned to five officers and 250 enlisted men. The company's four rifle platoons numbered 59 men each.¹⁸⁵ These unwieldy formations proved exceptionally difficult for the inexperienced officers and NCOs to command and control. The AEF GHQ dismissed the fears of some senior officers that the increased numbers of soldiers would overwhelm the already struggling junior leadership. In May 1918 the GHQ responded to criticism of its large formations by arguing,

The difficulty of infantry combat of today is due not so much to the inability to control men as it is the lack of men available to meet each new situation. Difficulties of control arise through lack of sufficient men and not through an excess. There is not doubt in my mind that the platoon leader that controls only 20 men in a task requiring 50 will make more tactical errors than if he had in excess of 30. The tendency to disperse 20 men so as to accomplish the task requiring 50 will often lead to disastrous results. Moreover it is false practice to organize an army on the assumed capabilities of the platoon leader. Platoon leaders are more easily made than supply systems, artillery, organizations, etc.¹⁸⁶

The GHQ's convoluted rationale for organizing big companies and platoons was proven wrong by the AEF's combat experiences. The ponderous units quickly dwindled in numbers as its soldiers lost contact with their leaders and either groped forward without direction or straggled rearward. Vernon Nichols, an infantry private in the 91st Division, spent three days wandering leaderless in "No man's land" after he and two other soldiers lost contact with his company on the first day that his unit was committed to the Argonne battle.¹⁸⁷ The company NCOs were usually incapable of assisting the officers in maintaining command and control. After his companies were shelled, a battalion commander observed, "Over the suddenly disorganized mass the mere handful of officers, without the slightest voluntary aid from the noncommissioned officers, are able to exercise but little control. The battalion is hopelessly scattered in the woods for the time being. All semblance of organization has vanished."¹⁸⁸ During the Lewis Board proceeding, the commander of the 7th Infantry Brigade (4th Division) argued,

I believe that the infantry officers will agree that we have used too many men in our combat formations and the inevitable result was greater and probably avoidable losses. The companies were too large to be handled by officers of average ability and little experience. Even a highly trained and experienced officer found great difficulty in handling a company of 250 men.¹⁸⁹

Thus the AEF's own organizational missteps greatly complicated its junior leaders' ability to control their units and inadvertently encouraged the clumsy, uncoordinated, and costly frontal attacks that often characterized the American's operations.

The Germans the Americans faced were quick to take advantage of the organizational and leadership weaknesses of the AEF. The American attacks in 1918 came up against a skilled enemy who had mastered the use of the elastic defense in depth to preserve his combat power while maximizing casualties among the attacker. The German elastic defense was characterized by belts of infantry strong points covered by interlocking machine gun fires all sited to make best use of the terrain. The German defenses were also backed by strong reserves of infantry that were to be used to counterattack stalled or consolidating Allied attacks.¹⁹⁰

The Americans realized that to overcome the German defenses they had to suppress the enemy strongpoints while the infantry simultaneously maneuvered to assault them. In the "Notes on Recent Operations" for Soissons, infantry leaders were warned, "The opposition encountered was largely in the shape of machine gun nests or isolated machine guns. To quickly overcome such opposition a formation of the platoon in depth which lends itself readily to fire to the front, combined with a flanking attack, is essential."¹⁹¹ It all seemed so simple on paper; yet in the confusion of the battlefield, and with untrained officers and soldiers, the simple often became the impossible. Without an understanding of how to deploy their forces and firepower while making the best use of terrain, the company level leaders continued to resort to frontal attacks for the remainder of the war. As George Marshall argued during the post war Lewis Board proceeding,

The insufficient training of our infantry was glaringly apparent. Company and battalion commanders took a long time to learn how to maneuver their troops, except by a straight ahead advance, and were even slower in learning how to combine fire action with maneuver.¹⁹²

The effects of the junior leader's professional shortcomings and their fondness for frontal attacks were evidenced by the AEF's high casualty rates. The AEF suffered over 256,000 battle casualties during the war. Of these, slightly less than 50,000 were killed in action or died of their wounds. While these statistics pale in comparison to the losses of the other powers, well over half of the American casualties occurred in the last seven weeks of the war. Of the AEF Marshal Foch commented, "It can be stated that the percentage of its losses in relation to its effectives engaged and to the length of time it was in the field was found to be the highest of all the Allied armies in 1918."¹⁹³

Many of the American losses can be traced back to the officers and NCOs' lack of tactical competency and experience. Since they often did not know tactically "what right looked like" they could offer no rational solution to the combat situations that they encountered. The commander of the 28th Infantry condemned the frequency that his "platoon leaders and company commanders fearlessly sacrificed themselves and their men to put . . . machine gun(s) out of

action.” He also argued, “The present has demonstrated more than ever the fact that the infantry officer must be ready to meet and to solve all of the situations met with. . . . and to be ready to adopt a formation that will meet a situation unfamiliar to him.”¹⁹⁴ While this was an accurate critique of the junior officers’ performance, it was perhaps too much to be expected given their training and the AEF’s “top down” command structure.

The correlation between AEF’s high casualties, weak tactical performance, and its poor junior leadership is best illustrated by examining the experiences of its units in the AEF’s major actions at Saint Mihiel and the Meuse Argonne. The AEF’s early battles in the Aisne-Marne region (Chateau-Thierry through Soissons, May-July 1918) had revealed great gaps in the tactical and technical knowledge of the army’s junior leadership, but the quickening tempo of operations in the summer of 1918 thwarted the GHQ’s efforts to address these problems. Thus, when the American’s launched their first independent military action at Saint Mihiel, the AEF had done little institutionally to correct the glaring leadership problems in its veteran or “new” divisions. The Saint Mihiel Offensive of September 1918 would also be the combat debut for most of the “new” National Guard and National Army divisions that had arrived in France since March. Although the offensive was an American success with relatively few casualties by the standards of the Western Front, the action further confirmed the lack of competency in the AEF’s junior leaders.

The experience of the 82nd Division is illustrative of leadership problems in the “new” divisions and the AEF’s failure to act on the lessons learned from its previous battles. The division’s first unit action was in the Saint Mihiel Offensive. While the division’s role in the operation was small, Saint Mihiel uncovered that many of the division’s officers were as deficient in the basic skills of map reading and small unit tactics as were those of the 1st Division at Soissons. The confusion caused by these deficiencies is best illustrated by comments made by

the 326th Infantry's Lieutenant Justus Owens in a letter that he sent to his mother soon after the battle,

We left our present positions about 9:00 P.M. . . . We headed for our objective after cutting thru our own wire, but hadn't gone far until we decided we were headed in the wrong direction It afterward turned out that we were headed in the right direction at first and lost out (and ourselves) by turning right We wandered around in the rain and slush and mire of no-mans land for several hours We finally located our woods about 2:15 A.M. It was still so dark that we could hardly see anything, so I placed my men in one corner of the woods and told them we'd hold tight until it got lighter.¹⁹⁵

Luckily for Owens and his soldiers, their objective had been abandoned by the Germans.

However, his blundering attempts to find the objective and his failure to clear it while he still possessed the cover of darkness put his soldiers at great risk and gave his men grounds to question his leadership. Owens admitted that after their night of futile wanderings his soldiers were wet, tired, and in "bad humor."¹⁹⁶

Not all of the 82nd Division's soldiers were as lucky as Owens' command. George Loukides, a private in H Company, 326th Infantry, noted that his officers "were not trained for combat and the privates paid for it." He recalled that during the St. Mihiel battle his company lost "many killed" when their officers led an attack across a dangerously open field in broad daylight.¹⁹⁷ Alvin York wrote that during the 328th Infantry's attack on Norroy the regiment's companies "got mussed up right smart," and his units' inability to protect its flanks allowed the Germans to enfilade the American positions.¹⁹⁸ The officers' tactical incompetence during the Saint Mihiel offensive lowered morale and strained the relationship between the leaders and the led. One sergeant bitterly remarked that some of his officers "should have been with the boy scouts."¹⁹⁹ This did not bode well for the division as it moved from the St. Mihiel sector to participate in the Meuse-Argonne campaign.

Saint Mihiel also indicated that the problems with junior leadership were not limited to the 82nd Division or just to the AEF's "new" units. Time and time again junior leaders in all of the attacking Divisions continued to press frontal attacks against strong German positions.

Company level leaders from the 90th Division's 358th and 359th Infantry Regiments, for example, exhibited a fanatical bravery in assaulting enemy positions near Vencheres. This "bravery" proved fatal to both the leaders and their soldiers. The 359th Infantry's Lieutenant Montgomery Fly, for example, was killed after leading his unit in several charges against German machine gun nests.²⁰⁰ Actions by leaders in veteran units such as the 42nd Division proved that junior officers and NCOs had learned little from their previous combat experience. During the 42nd Division's attack, its company officers pushed their soldiers against strong German positions using formations that would not have been out of place at the Battle of Gettysburg. As Private Charles MacArthur recalled,

The doughboys were scrambling out of their trenches Their officers ran after yelling: "Dress on the right you gosh dam lousy doughboys!" The doughboys strung along like crowds following a golf match, slowly and deliberately, dressing on the right whenever they were told. Here and there a man stumbled and fell. The line moved on under a cataract of shrapnel and high explosive.²⁰¹

This passage speaks volumes about the leaders' continued lack of tactical acumen and also their poor handling of their soldiers. Even the seasoned 2nd Division experienced problems with small unit leadership. The 23rd Infantry's Private John Miholick recalled that his company commander pushed his unit far forward of the division's limit of advance. The company was cut off from the rest of the battalion and "lost several men dodging our own artillery shells." The commander disappeared during the action and was later discovered by his soldiers in a dugout cowering "in fear." Miholick noted that unit "morale was really damaged" by the actions of their leaders.²⁰²

The American's tactical clumsiness at Saint Mihiel was not lost on the Germans. As their Army Unit C reported after the battle,

In their behavior, the American infantry displayed insufficient military training. They advanced mechanically, demonstrating great awkwardness in the management of their consecutive skirmish formations in open country. Their shock troops were startled at the slightest resistance, giving the impression of clumsiness and helplessness. Officers, as well as privates, did not understand how to utilize advantages of the country.²⁰³

The amateurish performance of the American junior leaders was also not lost on Pershing. While he praised the doughboys for their victory and loudly proclaimed the Americans' superiority, he sent messages to his division commanders expressing his concern with their officers' inept handling of their units.²⁰⁴ The G5's "Notes On Recent Operations" again castigated the junior leaders for their tendency to lose control of their units, for allowing their soldiers to bunch up during combat, and for their over reliance on frontal attacks.²⁰⁵ Unfortunately, these lessons learned came far too late to have much impact on the performance of the AEF's junior leaders. Within two weeks of the ending of the Saint Mihiel Offensive the AEF began its attack in the Meuse Argonne region. The issuing of orders and the movement of troops to their staging areas for the Meuse Argonne Offensive left no time to correct the leadership deficiencies again brought to light by the Saint Mihiel fight. For those leaders who survived the tuition, the Argonne would be the AEF's ultimate school for combat leadership.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive (26 September - 11 November 1918) was the American army's major military contribution to the First World War. Pershing hoped that the campaign would vindicate his insistence of an "open warfare" centered independent American army, but the Meuse-Argonne turned out to be a 47-day ordeal that pushed the AEF to the breaking point. General Hunter Liggett, the I Corps commander, noted that the region was, "a natural fortress beside which the Virginia Wilderness in which Grant and Lee fought was a park."²⁰⁶ Even with fully and correctly trained officers and soldiers the Argonne Forest and the rolling hills of the Meuse region would have presented a formidable obstacle to any army. The problem was that the AEF was not fully nor correctly trained to fight maneuver warfare in this, or any other, terrain.

The Meuse Argonne Offensive was the litmus test of the AEF's junior leadership. The great losses and near disintegration of American units in the battle was the price that the AEF paid for its failure to properly train and develop its company level officers and NCOs. A veteran of the battle later argued that, "too many men were unduly exposed to danger" by poorly trained

leaders. He blamed the losses on the fact that the “officers and men of the American Army had not learned the value of small fighting units in such fighting as we [later] encountered in the Argonne.”²⁰⁷ The AEF’s senior leaders were aware of these problems but again seemed unable to fix them. During the Lewis Board proceeding, the 7th Division's Colonel Gordon Johnston argued that in the Argonne the “tendency to belt straight ahead within a given sector was the cause not only of many losses, but of the failure to properly use all the means at hand for overcoming resistance.” In the same report Brigadier General Malin Craig decried the American habit of going forward “in close masses,” thus presenting the Germans an ideal target for artillery and machine gun fire.²⁰⁸

The experience of the 82nd Division is again useful to illustrate the effects of poor junior leadership in the Meuse-Argonne. The division's first three days of combat in the Argonne shocked the doughboys with its ferocity and deadliness. In the six months that the 82nd Division had served in France prior to the Meuse-Argonne, the division had lost a total of 133 soldiers killed in action, 1244 wounded or gassed, and 13 captured. From 7 to 10 October, the 327th Infantry alone suffered the loss of 118 soldiers killed, 700 wounded and 96 captured. When the 82nd Division was relieved from the lines on 30 October 1918 after 23 days of continuous fighting, the unit had lost 902 soldiers killed in action, 4897 wounded and 185 taken prisoner.²⁰⁹

Many of the division’s losses can be traced to poor decisions made by the its officers. Since junior leaders were unable to maintain command and control, the infantry attacks often fragmented into a series of uncoordinated, disorganized and huddled rushes against the enemy. In one such confused attack, Justus Owens (the officer previously lost in the dark at Saint Mihiel) and twelve other soldiers of Company L, 326th Infantry died as they blundered forward in a frontal attack against a dug-in machine gun.²¹⁰ Alvin York described the horror he experienced while watching a battalion of the 328th Infantry launch a frontal attack across open terrain,

The Germans met our charge across the valley with a regular sleet storm of bullets. I'm a-telling you that-there valley was a death trap . . . I guess our two waves got about half

way across and then jes couldn't get no further They jes stopped us in our tracks our boys jes done went down like the long grass before a mowing machine. Our attack jes faded out.²¹¹

In his diary entry for 11 October 1918, Private Fred Takes wrote that he and his comrades were demoralized by their company commander's refusal to allow his platoon to pull back twenty five yards from an exposed position being heavily shelled by the Germans. After suffering several losses, the men disobeyed the commander's orders and pulled back on their own. As a result of this shelling and a series of ill-planned attacks, Takes' company was down to only thirty five men by 16 October. After his officers ordered the company to attack a German position that had withstood previous assaults Takes wrote, "when we got the orders to go over the top at 5 A.M. we were disgusted, thinking they [his company and battalion commanders] wanted to kill us all off."²¹² By the second week of the offensive, the junior officers' "on the job training" was taking a huge toll in the lives and morale of their soldiers. Like Fred Takes, many doughboy's wondered if their leader's incompetence would eventually "kill us all off."

The experiences of other units in the Meuse Argonne mirrored those of the 82nd Division. In a frontal attack near Romagne on 10 October, a company from the 3rd Division's veteran 38th Infantry suffered fifty percent casualties after only 20 minutes of advancing. The company commander had not properly reconnoitered the route of the attack, had allowed his platoons to bunch up, and had blundered into the enemy's machine gun swept kill zone. The company's delay disrupted the battalion's attack, causing further casualties and confusion in the other companies of the battalion. After attacking for only 30 minutes the entire attack failed and the battalion withdrew.²¹³ Lieutenant Maury Maverick, a new replacement officer with the 1st Division's 28th Infantry, was completely unprepared for his first experience in combat. When his veteran officers ordered a frontal attack near Exermont on 4 October Maverick recalled,

Most of us who were young American officers knew little of actual warfare- we had the daring but not the training of the old officer of the front. The Germans simply waited, and then laid a barrage of steel and fire. And the machine gunners poured it on us. Our company numbered two hundred men. Within a few minutes about half of them were

either killed or wounded . . . everything happened that never happens in the storybooks of war. We literally lost each other. There were no bugles, no flags, no rums, and as far as we knew, no heroes. The noise was like great stillness, everything seemed blotted out. We hardly knew where the Germans were.²¹⁴

None of his training had prepared Maverick for his combat initiation or led him to question the wisdom of his company commander's frontal attack. The American junior leaders' lack of basic competence led to their unit's sluggish reactions under fire and to their overly simplistic tactics for dealing with the enemy. A soldier in the 3rd Division also recalled his unit's lack of tactical finesse in the Argonne. As his unit attacked through the woods, "Suddenly a heavy rifle fire and automatic rifle fire opened directly ahead. I heard somebody yell, 'Lets Go!' and we ran straight forward. At the same time the Germans on the right end of the line opened up on us with dozens of machine guns."²¹⁵ Without better training to fall back on, junior leaders limited their tactical options to massing their units against the closest source of fire.

The American propensity for mass frontal attacks is best illustrated by the experience of the 35th Division. The 35th, composed of National Guard units from Kansas and Missouri, experienced an inordinate amount of friction between its senior Regular Army officers and its OTC and National Guard junior and mid-level officers. Immediately before to the Argonne offensive Pershing replaced the division commander and most of the regimental commanders, all prewar National Guardsmen, with Regular Army officers. While these changes certainly undermined unit morale, much more damage was done to the unit's cohesion by the faulty tactics used by its junior leaders. The division had a "tough nut to crack" for its initial attack of the offensive. Its sector included the pillbox-studded heights of Cheppy, Vauquois, and Excermont. Taking these positions without undue casualties was a skill that was simply lacking in the junior officers of the division. Sergeant William Triplett of the 35th Division witnessed the devastating failure of a frontal attack against the town of Cheppy on the first day of the offensive. Triplett noted that some adjoining companies from the 138th Infantry, "tried to do a 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' only they didn't have any forces to get away on. The stretcher men were gathering 'em

in and lining 'em up" for the rest of the day."²¹⁶ The junior officers of the division continued to throw their soldiers against the German defenses in frontal attacks for the next three days. As one member of the division recalled, the units "simply had melted under machine gun fire." After four days of uninspired slugging the 35th Division had lost 8023 men.²¹⁷ The unit's morale was so shattered by the action that it was withdrawn from the line, never again to see significant combat.

The AEF's enemies and allies also critiqued its tactical skills and junior leadership in the Argonne Offensive. Most of these outside observers noted the deadly awkwardness of the American attacks. A 13 October German report stated,

The American method of attack consists in the employment of enormous masses. At the onset of the attacks, the infantry proved themselves to be strong of nerve, charging in close formation without preparatory artillery fire. However, as soon as the Americans encountered lively artillery and machine gun fire, their charge came to a halt. Even poorly sighted volleys from our guns frequently served to force the American infantry to retreat in disorder. The American infantry proved unable to exploit successes gained in the course of frontal thrusts by the employment of mass formations, supported by numerous tanks, while under the cover of heavy fog.²¹⁸

General Max von Gallwitz, the German commander in the Argonne sector, noted that the Americans made "great sacrifices" because the "subordinate leadership of the infantry and artillery. . . appeared deficient in the course of the attacks." He also commented, "The American superior command aimed at developing tactics according to the minute French pattern, but apparently it did not succeed as far as the middle and lower grades of officers were concerned."²¹⁹ Some in the enemy camp noted that a paucity of unit cohesion was the root cause of American tactical problems. In assessing the 2nd Division a Bavarian division commander wrote, "In the opinion of German troops opposite them, the individual American soldier is very brave but the troops as a whole lack a sense of unity and consequently their attacks break up quickly."²²⁰ The American junior leaders simply could not weld their soldiers into effective and united units.

French assessments of the Americans were equally harsh. The French castigated the Americans for their continued use of mass formations and frontal attacks. As a French liaison officer reported,

Enemy machine gun nests often stopped the advance of the American troops. With a courage beyond all praise their units attacked the nests frontally and were decimated. You don't attack machine guns from the front, no matter how much infantry you have.²²¹

The French also deplored the excessive losses caused by the American junior leader's lack of basic technical knowledge. One Frenchman noted,

I think that the American officers show they are raw and unprepared. I recall the case of a company at rest in the woods when they were suddenly bombarded with gas shells. As the officer failed to give the necessary order for donning their gas masks, half of the company were gassed and a quarter of their number died. The American captain simply did not know.²²²

On 18 October 1918 General Du Cane, the senior French liaison officer to the AEF, reported that the disjointed and ill-lead American attacks in the Argonne did nothing but "suffer wastage out of all proportion to the results achieved."²²³ While this criticism seems hypocritical coming from an army that a year previously had descended into mutiny as a result of equally disjointed attacks, Du Cane's observations echo comments made by the Americans themselves. A more sympathetic French officer, General Eugene Savatier, simply noted, "These young Americans lost a good many of their illusions in the depths of the Argonne."²²⁴

The foreign criticism of the American junior leaders' deficiency in tactical skill would have come as no surprise to the average doughboy. It did not take long for the soldiers to realize that their officer's lack of competency was hazardous to the doughboys' health. They resented the rather nonchalant indifference that many officers held toward casualties. In his after action report of the Argonne battle, Captain John K. Taylor informed his regimental commander,

To hasten the movement of the men to the front line positions here, I told them not to mind the bullets, that most of them were from our own machine guns. Upon seeing two men fall dead and another wounded by my side, I overheard a man say "our machine guns are sure hell."²²⁵

In his cavalier bragging to his superior Taylor seems to have missed the fact that his soldiers were being critical of his leadership and decisions. Whether thoughtlessly charging into machine gun positions or carelessly and unnecessarily exposing their soldiers to fire, the leader's poor combat leadership was breaking down their soldier's trust and confidence. As one captain argued, "It is useless to try to fool the American enlisted man: he soon loses respect for his officers when he observes their lack of experience, gained through the school of hard knocks."²²⁶

The doughboy's loss of respect for his leaders eventually decayed small unit cohesion and sapped the AEF's tactical effectiveness. Tensions between the AEF's officers and enlisted men had been building for some time. The training schools failed to teach the officers the fundamental leadership principles necessary to lead and care for their soldiers. An infantry officer admitted and condemned the "tendency of officers to always consider their own comforts and pleasure rather than that of their men."²²⁷ In a survey of officers awaiting demobilization, a number of them expressed regret at their own and at their peers' failure to better safeguard the welfare and just treatment of their soldiers.²²⁸ Raymond B. Fosdick, the director of the Commission on Training Camp Activities and the War Department's special consultant on troop morale, reported to the Secretary of War that many officers tended to carry out actions considered "galling to the democratic spirit of the troops." He blamed this failure on the officers' lack of training. Of the OTCs, Fosdick complained,

These schools with their hasty training too often turned out officers with no well-developed sense of responsibility, officers to whom the Sam Browne belt and the epaulets were merely the badge of a superior social class, the symbols of rights and privileges jealously to be guarded even at the expense of the welfare and morale of the men of their commands.

He went on to note that these problems were more troublesome in the American army due to the fact that the intellectual, moral and social distinctions between the officers and enlisted men were very small. Fosdick also pointed out that the officers knew too little from a military standpoint to set themselves apart from and above their men.²²⁹ As a soldier with the 5th Artillery recalled,

"The enlisted man never understood why an officer should have better food, more leave, better quarters than he did. They could never understand why the officer always was the boss when often he did not know what he was talking about."²³⁰

The combat environment of the First World War had made resupplying frontline troops an arduous task for all the Western Front's major combatants. In the American case, getting the required food, water, and ammunition to the combat soldier was exacerbated by poor leadership and logistical "know how" by company-level officers and NCOs. Lacking the rigid attention to the feeding and health of their soldiers, commanders found their ranks decimated by sickness and straggling. Uninformed and apathetic officers did not understand the limitations of their soldiers and often allowed their men to languish for days on end without proper food and clothing. The junior officers simply could not do routine things, such as feeding, arming, and sheltering their soldiers, routinely. A doughboy remembered that when the officers failed to supervise the men, "They threw away their raincoats and overcoats when they went over the top, so that later they had nothing at all to protect them from the cold and the wet. They went for days and days, sleeping in shell holes filled with ice-water, living on nothing but bully beef and water."²³¹ The health and combat efficiency of the unit flagged. During October, the 82nd Division's medical staff reported an average of 700 soldiers per day in their hospitals suffering from influenza, diarrhea and exhaustion.²³² Oliver Q. Melton, commander of K Company, 325th Infantry, reported that between 16 and 30 October, "everyone was sick and weak, many of the men were on the verge of a nervous breakdown."²³³

Inspector General reports from other divisions revealed the same poor physical conditions and morale in their units. The lack of strong junior leadership to provide for the soldier's basic needs, build unit cohesion, and reinforce their soldier's morale could have striking consequences. After only a week of the offensive, the First Army Inspector General reported a disturbing conversation with the 3rd Division G1,

Colonel Stone . . . stated that the 3rd Division relieved the 79th [the] day before yesterday. He says that the 79th Division was the most demoralized outfit that he had ever seen; that the men had thrown away a great deal of their equipment and that the 3rd Division has equipped a complete Machine Gun Company with the machine guns thrown away by the 79th; that the men are dejected and demoralized and apparently not the subject of any discipline. From his talk with different men of the 79th he was convinced that they were utterly unfit for any further operations.²³⁴

The situation only worsened as the campaign dragged onward. After his unit lost over 9000 men in two weeks, the 1st Division's Inspector General reported on 16 October that "the morale of the unit is not nearly as high as it formerly was. This is shown by the general demeanor of the men and the lack of snap and spirit which formerly prevailed in this unit."²³⁵ The Inspector General of the 26th Division noted that due to exposure to poor weather, nervous strain, and heavy losses, by 31 October his unit was "in such a state of exhaustion that it is unfit for even defensive operations."²³⁶ Weeks of frontal attacks, combined with the leaders' inability to care for their soldiers, had brought the AEF to exhaustion and the brink of dissolution.

Faced with the lack of care, wretched treatment, and the incompetence of their officers, over 100,000 American soldiers (out of approximately 800,000-900,000 combatants) simply stopped fighting and straggled towards the rear by the second week of the Meuse Argonne Offensive. The AEF Inspector General discovered that in one division alone over 6,000 soldiers were missing from its front line units.²³⁷ The AEF's high command blamed the straggling on the incompetence of their junior leaders. An Inspector General investigation of straggling in the First Army stated the causes for the problem were "Lack of discipline among both the officers and soldiers. . . . Lack of personnel and supervision of the men by the battalion and company commanders. . . . Lack of leadership by platoon leaders and sergeants."²³⁸ In many cases the units were simply too large and too spread-out for junior leaders to stop their soldiers from leaving the firing line. In other cases, the leader's bad example only encouraged straggling by their men. After experiencing the battlefield, a number of officers abrogated their responsibilities and tried to save their own skins. Private Ernesto Bisogno stated that at Chatel Chehery "some

officers ran like sheep.”²³⁹ Joseph Lawrence, an infantry officer in the 29th Division, reported that his company’s first sergeant deserted the unit in the middle of the Argonne fight, taking with him “several other men of the company.” Lawrence also recalled the poor example set by a company commander nicknamed “Dugout Pete” for his refusal to leave the safety of his bunker during his unit’s attacks.²⁴⁰

While the officers’ poor example or lack of supervision was a major cause of straggling, many cases of soldiers leaving the front may have resulted from the loss of confidence by the doughboys in their leaders.²⁴¹ In a telling indictment of leadership in the AEF, Major Robert G. Calder wrote, “In this war our men in the ranks have been superior to our officers, that is as soldiers they were better than the officers were as leaders.”²⁴² The soldiers were “thinking bayonets” that quickly came to realize the cost of their officer’s incompetence. As their commanders proved unable to competently discharge their duties and responsibilities, many enlisted men in the Meuse Argonne offensive opted for self-preservation. Many soldiers seemed to have believed that their officers had broken the social contract between the leaders and the led. Their expectations that their officers would look after their welfare and not needlessly risk their lives was simply not being met by the chain of command. After a series of costly attacks, the 3rd Division Inspector General reported, “Although I am inexperienced in judging men under battle conditions, I wish to state that those officers and men whom I saw of the 38th Infantry appeared to me, to use a slang term, ‘all in.’”²⁴³ The day after this report was made the Military Police rounded up over 500 stragglers from the division loitering in the rear area. Joseph Lawrence noted that during a bungled attack, “The company’s officers had let things get out of control. Company M had so many casualties that it was scattered and disorganized.” In response to this futile bloodletting some of the soldiers in Lawrence’s battalion gave themselves self-inflicted wounds, and many more “voted with their feet” by straggling out of the line.²⁴⁴ Despite increased military police patrols and other measures to curb straggling, the AEF was never able to bring this

problem under control. The junior leaders' demonstrated inability to lead and care for their soldiers in combat had so undermined unit cohesion that the AEF was never able to live up to its military potential or expectations. The 100,000 soldiers straggling behind the lines during the Meuse Argonne Offensive was the ultimate legacy of the army's failure to properly train and develop its company officers and NCOs to be combat leaders.

Perhaps the only thing that prevented the AEF from collapsing in the Meuse Argonne was the continued willingness of its junior leaders to sacrifice themselves in battle. While the officers and NCOs lacked experience and "know how," few lacked courage. Over 78 percent of the army's World War I Medal of Honor recipients were officers or NCOs. Yet, most of the medals were awarded for individual action, usually involving a single-handed frontal assault on the enemy, and not for inspirational or skillful leadership.²⁴⁵ The leaders also paid a great price for their incomplete training. In terms of percentages, infantry officers (mostly captains and lieutenants) suffered the highest losses of all ranks and branches in the war. Infantry leaders suffered an average of 567 casualties per thousand officers while infantry enlisted men suffered an average of 447 casualties per thousand soldiers.²⁴⁶ The 325th Infantry provides a striking example of this attrition. When the regiment entered the Meuse-Argonne battle on 8 October 1918, it had a strength of 100 officers. By 31 October 1918 its strength was down to 33 officers.²⁴⁷

The high casualties among the AEF's junior leaders was a further blow to unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. Few company officers and NCOs left their combat "on the job training" unscathed. Too many junior leaders were being killed or wounded before they learned the tactical lessons necessary to survive. The officers and NCOs that replaced these fallen leaders usually lacked any experience with soldiers and often had even less training than their predecessors. Veteran soldiers often feared and resented the inexperienced replacement officers. As the 1st Division's Wilbert Stambaugh recalled, "[Our] newly commissioned lieutenant did not

understand actions in war, [he] tried to force us beyond our own artillery fire.”²⁴⁸ A soldier in the 3rd Division wrote,

The new officers began making themselves unpopular as soon as they arrived. They were replacements. Not a front line officer in the bunch. The men were all too desperate to be bothered by forms and they weren't very respectful. One of the officers said, "What's the matter with this goddamned hard-boiled outfit? They go round here getting sick like babies!" About noon a lieutenant from one of the 7th Infantry companies worked his way up to us. He was a front line officer and he got plenty of respect He left us one of the new officers and took the rest away with him. They came under fire just as they left the position. One of the new men we hadn't liked was knocked off. He'd been at the front just long enough to get his boots muddy.²⁴⁹

It seems that the doughboys understood the cost that they would have to bear to train the new leaders. The AEF was never able to break the seemingly endless cycle of half-trained leaders being killed or wounded due to their limited competency only to be replaced by other half-trained leaders that merely repeated the same tactical mistakes.

High casualties in the officer ranks placed a severe strain on company NCOs. As previously noted, the army had done little to prepare its NCOs to exercise combat leadership. As an officer in the 119th Infantry (30th Division) reported in August 1918, "They have been too dependent on officers telling them not only what to do but how to do it. NCOs should be given more responsibility and more authority and should be allowed to make and correct their own mistakes with less interference from officers."²⁵⁰ The AEF's "restrictive control" system extended down to platoon level. Officers often treated NCOs as mere privates with stripes. This attitude was transmitted to the privates and subsequently decreased the NCO's authority. The 7th Division's Corporal Frank Dillman wrote, "the boys virtually refused to work except when a commissioned officer was over them."²⁵¹ With no special training to prepare them for leading platoons and companies, American NCOs were at a loss when officer casualties thrust them into command positions. During an attack near Soissons, Private John Barkley recalled,

A group of our men led by a lieutenant, the last of our company officers, tried to cross the road. The lieutenant dropped. The rest of the men dived back beside the road. A sniper's bullet had gotten the lieutenant and the machine guns then opened up We found one of our sergeants commanding what was left of the company. The sergeant completely

lost his head. He sent a detail out to bring the lieutenant in. They were all hit before they got to him. The sergeant ordered me to form another detail, go out in close formation, and come back with the lieutenant. I asked the sergeant to wait a little, then let me take Mike and go out alone. . . . I said "There is no use killing any more soldiers by sending them out there now."²⁵²

The AEF GHQ realized that it had to do something to fill the leadership voids caused by heavy officer losses in the summer of 1918. To deal with the AEF's demands for replacements of all grades, Pershing eventually skeletonized five divisions, reorganized six more into replacement depot units, and turned one more, the 87th Division, over to the Services of Supply to prop up the army's strained logistics infrastructure.²⁵³ Even these draconian measures proved ineffective in filling the junior leaders' shattered ranks. The AEF eventually tried to solve its leadership shortage by establishing its own OTC to commission enlisted soldiers. The AEF's officer candidate school was established in November 1917, but it received little command attention until the spring and summer of 1918. While the school produced 10,976 officers, this move did little to improve the quality or competency of the officer corps.

The AEF's OTC faced the same challenges of time, quality of personnel, and the "blind leading the blind" dilemma as the stateside courses. Many of the enlisted candidates were nearly as ignorant of military matters as were the civilians filling the stateside schools. The AEF G-5, Harold Fiske, noted that since over 30 percent of the candidates had never received any marksmanship or real infantry training before reporting to the course, "much time" in the OTC instruction "had to be spent in rudimentary work."²⁵⁴ The AEF OTC also had difficulty in enticing prospective candidates. Fiske reported that by September 1918 the candidate school faced the "practical disappearance of suitable officer material from the ranks." He blamed that shortage on the fact that "many organizational commanders bitterly opposed the detachment of their best non-commissioned officers" and that they tended to use the school as a dumping ground for misfits.²⁵⁵ Given the heavy casualties among junior officers, some enlisted soldiers chose to improve their chances of survival by remaining in the ranks. In a letter home dated 25 October

1918, Sergeant Benjamin Heath wrote, "I could get an opportunity to go to the infantry training camp, but I would rather come home safe and sound without a commission than perhaps not at all."²⁵⁶ Fendell Hagan, a first sergeant in the 140th Infantry, had similar sentiments and chose to stay with his unit in the Argonne rather than report as ordered to the OTC.²⁵⁷

The AEF OTC was also running against the crush of time. As officer casualties mounted throughout the late summer and fall of 1918, the AEF was forced to reduce the amount of training in the OTC. Joseph Lawrence was commissioned after less than two months in the candidate course. After the war Pershing admitted, "It must not be thought that such a system is ideal, but it represents a compromise between the demand for efficiency and the imperative and immediate necessity for trained replacement officers."²⁵⁸ These officers paid a high price for this compromise. Of the seven officers that reported with Joseph Lawrence to the 29th Division following OTC, only two ended the war unscathed. Three were killed in action and the remaining two suffered serious wounds. Lawrence noted that many of his classmates that went to other divisions were killed within two weeks of graduation.²⁵⁹ These nascent officers quickly found themselves in the thick of the Argonne fight. Due to officer casualties Lawrence's best friend, 2nd Lieutenant Fred Sexton, found himself commanding a company in the 113th Infantry after being in the unit only four days and having graduated from OTC only ten days prior. Sexton was killed in action on 20 October 1918 after only 20 days of commissioned service.²⁶⁰ The AEF's most popular leadership course, the "school of hard knocks," had again exacted the highest tuition.

While poorly trained officers and NCOs greatly contributed to high casualties and the slowness of the American advance through the Meuse-Argonne, in all fairness it must be stated that the AEF's junior leaders were not uniformly incompetent. Those leaders that survived their first few weeks of fighting in the Meuse-Argonne usually learned from their mistakes and became able combat commanders. The AEF also contained a smattering of men who possessed natural

leadership ability or a flair for small unit tactics. These men, such as Alvin York and Sam Woodfill, were not only capable and respected leaders, but were also able to inflict great losses on the enemy with few American casualties. Unfortunately, leaders like Woodfill and York were few and far between. The American army had no method of training and developing average college boys to become leaders like Sam Woodfill: an officer able to use terrain, movement, and firepower to limit the danger to his subordinates while maximizing the damage that his company could do to the enemy.

On 14 July 1919 (Bastille Day) a horse-mounted Pershing led the American Provisional Regiment, a hand picked unit consisting of combat soldiers drawn from all the AEF's divisions, in the Great War's largest victory parade. In the end it should be remembered that, in spite of its flaws, the AEF had played a large roll in the defeat of Imperial Germany and earned its right to pass through the Arc de Triomphe on that July day. In the Meuse-Argonne in particular, the Americans had broken the German forces confronting it, but only after six weeks of bloody attritional fighting that left the AEF dazed and staggering on the battlefield like a punch-drunk boxer. The Americans' place in the victory parade had come at a high price in blood, shed in places like Cantigny, Soissons, and the Argonne.

The American army's failure to properly train and develop its officers and NCOs was made clear by the AEF's performance on the battlefield. The opening weeks of the Meuse-Argonne offensive were marked by slow progress, missed opportunities, and high casualties. Pershing had intended that the AEF to fight like a master swordsman: a fighter able to dispatch his enemies with quick maneuvers and deadly thrusts. The AEF, however, was more like a blind giant: a creature groping to find its opponent, suffering wound after wound in doing so, but finally crushing the enemy with its superior weight when it finally found him. The changing nature of warfare demanded junior officers and NCOs comfortable with a host of new weapons and ready to use their initiative on the battlefield. The junior leaders were not only unprepared

for this challenge, the AEF seemed to work to keep the leaders from rising to the occasion. The AEF's huge combat formations were too ponderous for the half-trained leaders to adequately command and control. The army's infatuation with top-down "restrictive control" did not value or encourage decision-making and initiative in its junior leadership. Improper and incomplete training had not prepared the leaders for the enemy and the environment that they encountered in combat. Consequently, American operations throughout the war tended to be characterized by bloody frontal attacks. This bloodletting was deadly to unit cohesion, combat effectiveness, and the leaders themselves. The junior leaders' inept tactical performance set them at odds with both their superiors and their subordinates and brought the AEF to the brink of exhaustion and dissolution. High casualties among officers also created a deadly cycle of leadership incompetence in the AEF's small units. In the final analysis, the Americans' price for having unprepared leaders were the unnecessary dead that littered the AEF's battlefields and the army's painfully slow progress through the Argonne region in September and October 1918.

CHAPTER 8

"WHAT PRICE GLORY, CAPTAIN FLAGG?"

During the First World War, the United States managed to induct over four million people into the nation's armed forces. More than two million of these soldiers reached France before the Armistice. The nation learned how to raise a mass army but never learned how to train its officers to properly lead its soldiers and how to fight a modern war. Fresh American soldiers helped to assure the Allied victory, but the AEF's casualty rates were too high for its limited military achievements. Many of these casualties can be traced back to the fact that the AEF had far too many "Captain Flaggs." Like Lawrence Stallings' fictional character, many of the AEF's officers and NCOs had been elevated too rapidly to command and lacked the training and skills required to lead soldiers in combat. The AEF's half-trained "Captain Flaggs" usually fought bravely, but seldom fought skillfully. Their soldiers (and themselves) often paid the ultimate "price of glory" for their incompetence.

Under the pressures of the time, the quantity of soldiers that the United States could ship overseas took precedence over the quality of their junior leadership. In his final report on training in the AEF, Harold Fiske wrote,

It must be remembered that to the end most of our divisions were lacking in skill. Given plenty of time for preparation, they were capable of powerful blows; but their blows were delivered with an awkwardness and lack of resource that made them unduly costly and rendered it impracticable to reap the full fruits of victory.²⁶¹

Fiske realized that the costly "awkwardness" of the American divisions often stemmed from junior leaders lacking critical tactical and technical skills. As was (and is) often the case in war, it was the junior leaders at the "tip of the spear," and not the generals, that ultimately decided whether or not the commander's grand plans were properly executed. In the case of the AEF, the spearpoint was made of a brittle and untempered metal. The failure of the leadership "spearpoint" was not due to the poor human material that comprised the weapon. In the majority of cases, the AEF's junior officers and NCOs were patriotic, educated, dedicated to the cause, and

brave to a fault. They were eager to learn and often understood the limitations of their training and experience. The American junior leaders failed to achieve the necessary level of competency because of a host of inter-related systemic problems associated with the nation's rapid mass mobilization and the army's lack of knowledge, experience, and understanding of how to fight a modern industrial war. Thus, the leadership "spearpoint" was "brittle and untempered" because of a hasty and faulty forging process carried on both stateside and in France.

In all fairness, it should be noted that problems with leadership competency were not limited to the American army. All of the European powers, to a greater or lesser extent, faced the challenges of how to raise and train junior leaders for their wartime mass armies. Like the Americans of 1917 and 1918, the Europeans of 1914 and 1915 had to train their armies to deal with a new and unexpected form of warfare while also coping with the strains of mass mobilization and the constant attrition of existing leadership.

The British army's wartime leadership experience was perhaps the closest to that of the United States. This was not surprising given the two nation's similarities in prewar preparedness and their attitudes toward the military. Mobilization of the "Kitchener army" and high losses among junior officers and NCOs in 1914 and 1915 forced the British to adopt ad hoc measures that closely resembled steps later taken by the Americans to obtain leaders. In a drastic break with tradition, the majority of wartime British officers were promoted from the ranks or came from the Plattsburg-like Officer Training Corps.²⁶² As with their American counterparts, the incompetence of the hastily trained British junior leaders often exacted a heavy toll in soldiers' lives. As Ivor Maxse, the British Inspector General for Training, noted shortly after the war,

The importance of training the commanders of companies, platoons and sections cannot be over-emphasized, and it was the shortage of these trained officers and non-commissioned officers which caused so much deterioration after the battle of Ypres in 1917. It was also the cause of avoidable casualties in every subsequent battle.²⁶³

While the overall American leadership experience was not unique, external influences and specific social, military, and political conditions in the United States tended to exacerbate its

efforts to raise a competent corps of junior leaders. The dire condition of the Allies in 1917 forced the Americans to mobilize and enter the fray at a rate much faster than the army was institutionally prepared to handle. Similarities in British and American leadership problems are interesting, but it should be noted that the Americans did managed to deploy over two million men to France in 16 months; a number that took the British three years to attain.²⁶⁴ This hurried mobilization, however, did come at the cost of leader training. While the Germans and the French benefited from a large cadre of reserve officers and NCOs, early leadership casualties and the unexpected nature of the war meant that none of the Western European armies of 1914-1916 had any particular monopoly on leadership competency. After the initial shock of 1914, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, the European armies were more or less "all green alike;" and thus able to learn their hard lessons without giving material advantage to any one side. Arriving three years later, the AEF faced an enemy whose experience gave them a decided tactical advantage.

The United States was perhaps the least prepared army, materially and intellectually, that entered the war on the Western Front. From 1914 to mid-1916, the Wilson administration simply did not want to face the political pressure from socialists, old-line Populists, and anti-British minority groups that came with any serious preparations for the nation's possible entry into the war. This unpreparedness ultimately forced the army to make compromises with the stateside training of its leaders and soldiers in 1917 that later had detrimental affects on the battlefield. The United States' pressing need for officers in the spring of 1917 led the army to adopt the flawed OTC training and commissioning system. Training in the OTCs failed to impart the leadership, tactical, and technical skills needed by the fledging officers in combat. The army's process for selecting and developing NCOs was even more defective. The Regular Army's ad hoc system of company commanders selecting NCOs was one that could not adapt to the realities of the mass draftee "National Army." Lacking the training and status to set them above the mass of doughboys, the AEF's NCOs remained "privates with stripes." This lack of leader "know

how,” combined with the systemic problems associated with the army’s mass mobilization, hindered the army’s efforts at training its privates for war and building cohesive and effective combat units.

Pershing and his senior leaders recognized the problems with their junior leadership and took steps to improve overall leader competency. Unfortunately, these efforts ran afoul of the rapidly changing military situation in the spring and summer of 1918 as well as some of the same systemic problems that plagued leadership training in the United States. The AEF’s continued reliance on the Allies for training support, and its own inability to articulate a coherent “open warfare” doctrine, left its junior leaders without a firm point of departure on which to base their continued leadership training and development. For many junior leaders, their training in France was thus unrealistic or irrelevant to the situations they later faced in combat.

The AEF also sought to correct its leadership problems with education and a more centralized command and control structure. But, the AEF’s elaborate schools system only exacerbated problems with unit cohesion without substantially increasing the junior leaders’ tactical and technical competency. In an effort to overcome their subordinates’ lack of experience, and to save themselves from possible relief from command, the AEF’s field grade and general officers attempted to impose centralized top-down control of their units. While the changing nature of warfare doomed the senior officers’ efforts at “restrictive control,” their micromanagement of junior officers left a bitter legacy of mistrust and recriminations between them and their subordinates.

The battlefield was the ultimate arena for highlighting the army’s sins of omission, commission, and misdirection in the training and professional development of its junior leaders. From the AEF’s initial battles to the climatic struggle in the Meuse Argonne, the company level officers and NCOs demonstrated that they lacked the proper amount and focus of training to deal with the tactical situations presented them. Lacking even basic skills such as map reading, the

use of terrain for tactical movement, and the employment of supporting weapons, all too often the junior leaders led their soldiers in mass frontal attacks against strong enemy positions. These clumsy tactics caused excessive casualties that eroded the doughboys' faith in their commanders, wore down unit cohesion, and contributed to the AEF's massive straggler problem in the Argonne. The attacks also caused huge losses in the ranks of the junior leaders. This led to an unbreakable cycle of incompetence as half-trained leaders were supplanted by even less trained and experienced replacement officers and NCOs.

The American experience with junior leadership in World War One was important for the lessons it provided for the post war army and for the continuing relevance it has for today's military professional. Many officers of that period realized that the army's failure to properly train and develop its junior leaders ultimately blunted the combat effectiveness and potential of the AEF. Instead of the great sweeping maneuvers envisioned by Pershing, the AEF's biggest operation was a cumbersome slugging match that brought the army to the brink of exhaustion. While officially adhering to the "party line" that superior American manpower and "know how" had decisively contributed to the Allied victory, many of the AEF's senior leaders later admitted that the army had done a poor job of preparing for combat. The 1919 Lewis Board attempted to identify and correct the tactical problems (to include poor junior leadership) that the AEF encountered on the battlefield. The Great War experience encouraged the army to expand its schools system and institutionally promoted professional development to counter flaws uncovered by the war in the Regular officer corps.²⁶⁵ As Superintendent of the Military Academy from 1919-1922, Douglas MacArthur changed the curriculum for the Corps of Cadets to address some of the glaring deficiencies in junior officer leadership that he had observed in France. For the first time in the academy's history, its curriculum included formal classes on military leadership.²⁶⁶ After the war, the army did not allow the ROTC program to languish due to lack of attention and direction as had its Land Grant College cadet corps predecessor. The National Defense Act of

1920 strengthened the army's commitment to the ROTC and provided for a more rational and regulated system for maintaining a trained Officer's Reserve Corps.²⁶⁷ By 1922 even Pershing, the strongest guardian of the AEF's reputation, tacitly admitted that leadership had been lacking in his army and that reform was necessary. In a keynote address to the Reserve Officer Association, "Black Jack" stated, "A resolve has gone forth, embodied in the law of 1920, that never again shall our untrained boys be compelled to serve their country on the battlefield under the leadership of new officers with practically no conception of their duties and responsibilities."²⁶⁸ Efforts to improve the quality of junior leaders in the 1920s and 1930s later bore fruit in World War II. In fact, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall wrote in 1941, "without these [reserve] officers the successful rapid expansion of our Army . . . would have been impossible."²⁶⁹

Although the post war military draw-down and public apathy prevented the army from making good use of its lessons learned in the war, the generation of young officers that came of age in World War One tried to keep the United States from making similar leadership mistakes in the nation's future wars. In 1934 Fort Benning published its classic *Infantry in Battle* to give junior "peace-trained officers something of the viewpoint of the veteran."²⁷⁰ The work contained vignettes on minor tactics and leadership, mostly drawn from American actions in the Great War, to better prepare a new generation of junior leaders for the realities of combat. The book's editor, Colonel George Marshall, understood all too well the limitations of America's wartime leadership and its flawed training. In the introduction Marshall noted, "In our schools we generally assume that organizations are well-trained and at full strength, that subordinates are competent, that supply arrangements function, that communications work, that orders are carried out. In war many or all of these conditions may be absent."²⁷¹

When another World War again presented the United States with the need to raise a mass army, senior officers such as Marshall were adamant that the army be provided with competent

junior leaders more realistically and thoroughly trained than the generation of 1917. In March 1941 Secretary of War Henry Stimson's proposal that the army return to the OTC model for selecting, training, and commissioning its officers led to a rare confrontation with Marshall. Marshall believed that the OTC plan had failed the army in 1917 and, for the first and only time, he threatened to resign if Stimson adopted the OTC for the new mobilization.²⁷²

Ultimately, the World War II officer corps would be composed mainly of ROTC and Officer Candidate School (OCS) graduates. The majority of junior officers came from the OCS. Unlike their World War One predecessors, these officers were commissioned after having proven themselves as competent enlisted men for a minimum of four-to-six months and demonstrated tactical and leadership abilities during their 17 week long OCS course. Most of these OCS officers went on to attend an additional two-to-three month branch advanced or company commander's course for more intensive technical, tactical, and leadership training.²⁷³ Although the World War II army also faced systemic problems with its mass mobilization (frequent levying of personnel from existing units for cadres or replacements, shortages of qualified instructors, etc), it did a much better job of developing competent officers than did the army of the Great War.²⁷⁴

Unfortunately, lessons learned are sometimes forgotten in the heat of a new crisis. The army in Vietnam would face problems with junior leadership that often resembled those of the Great War. Vietnam also showed that the army's problems with properly selecting and training junior leaders were not just limited to wars requiring mass mobilization. Lyndon Johnson's refusal to expand mobilization for the war and the army's own flawed individual rotation policy created a constant drain of junior leaders from American combat units. The growing unpopularity of the war also hindered army efforts to recruit suitable men for officers and NCOs. As with their Great War predecessors, officers in Vietnam resorted to rapidly promoting privates

and specialists to the NCO ranks. These so-called “shake and bake sergeants” lacked specialized training for their jobs and usually owed their positions to their length of time “in country.”

The officer situation was equally bad. The widespread granting of educational deferments, the declining enrollment in ROTC programs, and the incessant demand for platoon leaders forced the army to turn to the OCS to obtain officers. By 1967 over half of the army’s lieutenants were the products of a four-month long OCS course. Given the strains of “supply and demand” the army could not afford to be very selective in the officers that it commissioned. As was the case with the World War One OTC, the press of time forced the OCS programs to skimp on leadership and tactical training. Thus the OCS programs often commissioned officers lacking the leadership ability and competency to lead soldiers in combat. Lieutenant William Calley, the infamous leader of the My Lai Massacre, was one such officer. Calley, a college dropout and unemployed misanthrope, left OCS for Vietnam in 1968 untrained and unfit for the position that he held. But, in a larger sense, it was the army’s failure to properly screen, train, and develop its junior leaders that was one of the root causes of its morale and discipline problems from 1969 to the end of the war. As one colonel noted at the time, “we have at least two or three thousand Calleys in the army just waiting for the next calamity.”²⁷⁵ While the American armies of the Great War and Vietnam had difficulty fielding competent junior leaders for different reasons, the end result was the same. In both cases, incompetent and unprepared leaders caused unnecessary casualties and eroded unit morale and cohesion.

But what does the American experience in the Great War offer to today’s military professional? Much of the problems associated with the creation of a competent corps of junior leaders in World War One stemmed from the nature of the mass mobilization and the society of the time. Today’s army may face little likelihood of having to undergo another mobilization on the scale of the First World War’s, but the nation may again face the need for a mobilization that goes beyond its present active and reserve forces. The nation is ill prepared for this possibility.

Even today the army faces grave challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining good junior leaders. The army has been unable to recruit sufficient would-be officers and NCOs to fill its present requirements. Its junior NCOs, lieutenants, and captains are leaving the service at a record and alarming rate. Given the rapid promotions in the junior leader ranks, and the wartime training and readiness distracters that come with our ever increasing operations other than war, those leaders that remain often lack the level of knowledge and experience of those occupying their same grades a decade ago. All of this is occurring when the nature of peace and stability operations and the Division XXI concept require junior leaders with the ability to think and act independently. If the army were to face a shooting war (limited or otherwise) it could expect high casualties in its junior leader ranks. Given our present inability to recruit and retain officers these losses would be very difficult to overcome without resorting to the ad hoc measures taken by the army in World War One and Vietnam. Thus, while the possible scale of the mobilization has changed, the issues of how to best recruit, train, and develop combat leadership remain.

The army can avoid the leadership problems that have plagued it in the past. However, this can only occur if it is willing to devote the time and money necessary to retain its present junior leadership, maintain the ROTC and OCS infrastructure for training future leaders, and develop rational contingency plans for an unexpected national mobilization. In the short term the army must work to provide the personal and professional incentives required to retain its talented junior leaders. This will ensure that the army will have the potential commanders and "brain power" to meet future contingencies and requirements. The army must also commit to reversing the decline in ROTC enrollment and consider reopening lapsed ROTC units in the nation's colleges. Even if these ROTC students never enter active duty or the reserve components they can provide a core of "emergency" officers to ease a large-scale mobilization or make good unexpected junior leader losses.

In the long term the army should devote some time and thought to how it would expand its corps of junior leaders and NCOs in a short-notice, time-constrained environment. As George Marshall was reputed to have said, "In peacetime you have all of the time in the world and none of the money, in wartime you have all of the money in the world but none of the time." Many of the AEF's leadership problems stemmed from the fact that the prewar army had devoted very little time and energy to mobilization planning. Currently the army lacks a doctrine or a vision for a leadership mobilization that goes beyond the call-up of the reserve components. As an institution the army must consider what steps it would have to take to rationally and competently train an increased number of junior officers and NCOs in time of an emergency. A little thought on the problem in peacetime will avoid much of the "rush, hurry, and confusion" of the opening weeks of a war and buy the army the most precious war commodity: time. For example, if given only six months to take a potential officer from civilian life to commissioning and platoon command, what technical, tactical, and leadership skills would the army want and expect this nascent officer to have before commanding soldiers in combat? How would you train the officer candidate to meet this standard? What resources would be required? We must be willing to take the political and military heat for demanding time to properly develop leadership at the spearpoint. If the army fails to do this, as was the case in the Great War, the "price of glory" for the next generation of "Captain Flags" will be high to themselves, their soldiers, and the nation.

NOTES

¹Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings, "What Price Glory?" {1924} in *Twenty-Five Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre*, ed. John Gassner (New York: Crown Publishers, 1952), 78. Laurence Stallings served as infantry captain in the Marine Brigade of the 2nd Division. His leg was amputated as a result of a serious wound he suffered at Belleau Wood. His nonfiction work *The Doughboys* (1963) remains one of the best histories of the AEF.

²US Department of War, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1919), 16-21.

³*Ibid.*, 22, 30. These percentages are based on an analysis of the numbers given in the graph minus the statistics for physicians, chaplains, and technicians commissioned directly from civilian life. I omitted these officers because they were outside the realm of traditional staff and line officers.

⁴US Department of the Army, *FM22-100 Army Leadership*, draft copy approved for CGSC release and distribution only (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1999), 2-24 - 2-25.

⁵US Department of War, *Field Service Regulations of the United States Army, With Corrections to May 21, 1913* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913), 51, 62, 161.

⁶Major General David C. Shanks, *Management of the American Soldier* (New York: Booklet published by Thomas F. Ryan, circa 1917-1918), 4-5. MG Shanks, a veteran of the Philippine Insurrection with 33 years of service in 1917, commanded the Army embarkation port at Hoboken, NJ at the time of the booklet's publication. The booklet itself was given free to officers departing Hoboken for France. An original copy is in the possession of the author.

⁷Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 281. Coffman notes that the written examination often took the officer over 100 pages to answer and was used to test the officer's knowledge of Army Regulations, the rifle firing regulations, military law, and drill.

⁸US Department of War, *U.S. Army Regulations, 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 169-172.

⁹US Department of War, *The United States Army in the World War 1917-1919*, Volume 16, *General Orders, GHQ, AEF* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 240-241. Hereafter these volumes will be referred to as *U.S. Army in the World War*. Examples of the Officer Efficiency Report form used by the AEF are found in U.S. National Archives, RG 120, Entry 796, Box 3. An example of the Officer's Qualification Report (the ultimate form of the "officer's record book") is found in NA, RG 120, Entry 541, Box 2286. For an overview of the wartime officer evaluation system see, Joseph Whitehorne, *The Inspectors General of the United States Army 1903-1939* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1998), 145-148.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹For the best description of the early evolution of the army's education system see, Timothy Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978).

¹²Ernest Fisher, Jr., *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Non Commissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 150-151 and Coffman, *The Old Army*, 395-398.

¹³The best examples of these books are Lincoln C. Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1916) and James A. Moss, *Manual of Military Training* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing, 1914). Both of these works were extremely popular during the war. Moss' *Manual of Military Training*, for example, went through two editions and five imprints between February and November 1917.

¹⁴Lincoln C. Andrews, *Leadership and Military Training* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1918), 26, 51.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 31-39. For similar examples of the Army's written institutional leadership norms see James A. Moss, *Manual of Military Training*, Second Edition (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing, 1917), 106-109., and Major John C. McArthur, *What A Company Officer Should Know* (New York: The Harvey Press, 1917), 31-50. Following the method of Swinton's classic *The Defense of Duffer's Drift* McArthur's work follows an imaginary "Captain X" through his first weeks as a company commander of a newly formed unit.

¹⁶US Department of the Army, *FM22-100 Army Leadership*, draft copy approved for CGSC release and distribution only, 2-24 - 2-25.

¹⁷Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service*, 13.

¹⁸US Department of War, *Annual Reports 1913*, vol. 1. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1914), 151-2.

¹⁹Quoted in, Gene M. Lyons and John W. Massland, "The Origins of the ROTC," *Military Affairs* vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Spring 1959), 3.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 3-5. and *War Department Annual Report, 1913*, 189.

²¹Graham Cosmas, *An Army for Empire* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1994), 93, 126-128, 143-146; and Ninninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army*, 56.

²²Ira L. Reeves, *Military Education in the United States* (Burlington: Free Press, 1914), 68. Reeves was a Regular Army captain and Professor of Military Science and Tactics at the University of Vermont when he published this work. The Army Appropriations Act of 1904 required the army to provide 100 officers to support civilian educational institutions. To qualify for assignment of a Regular Army instructor, military colleges had to have 100 students over the age of 15 enrolled in their military programs. Non-military institutions were required to have 150 students enrolled in their military programs.

²³*Ibid.*, 68-9.

²⁴*War Department Annual Report, 1913*, 188, and Reeves, 79.

²⁵Reeves, 102-3. Reeves' assessment of the attitudes of college professors may be far too harsh. The president of his own institution, Guy Benton was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the Plattsburg Movement and many other academics strongly favored preparedness and Universal Military Training. John G. Clifford, *The Citizen Soldiers: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement, 1913-1920* (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1972), 24-7.

²⁶*War Department Annual Report, 1913*, 189. Similar comments appeared in the *Annual Report* of the following year. For a sketch of military education at the micro level see Richard S. Faulkner "Our Patriotic Duty at Home and Abroad: The University of Georgia in World War I," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. LXXIX, no. 4 (Winter 1995), 924-931.

²⁷Captain Richard Stockton, Jr., "Military Schools and the Nation," *Infantry Journal*, Vol XI, no. 1 (July-August 1914), 25.

²⁸Reeves, 99-100, 102, 105., Clifford, 12-13, also, LTC H.C. Hale, "Military Instruction in Colleges," *Infantry Journal*, vol.X, no. 5 (March-April 1914), 688-691. Hale offered instructors advice in overcoming problems in teaching college students.

²⁹Frank Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, vol. 1 (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1977), 101-109.

³⁰"Origins of ROTC," 10-12. and US Department of War, *The National Defense Act Approved June 3, 1916*, with updates to June 1924 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1924), 24-27.

³¹John K. Mahon, *History of the National Guard and Militia* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 139-143, 147-149. and Timothy K. Nenninger, "The Army Enters the Twentieth Century," in Kenneth J. Hagen and William R. Roberts, *Against All Enemies* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 219-222.

³²Nenninger, "The Army Enters the Twentieth Century," 222.

³³Mahon, 145. and Nenninger, "The Army Enters the Twentieth Century," 220. It is interesting to note that French and German observers noted the same discrepancies. One German noted that Guard officers, "know less of things military than a German schoolboy." Leo Brenner, "The American 'Million Army'," *The Infantry Journal*, vol. XIII, no. 5 (February 1917), 492. For French comments see Lee Kennett, "The A.E.F. Through French Eyes," *Military Review*, vol. LII, no. 11 (November 1972), 5.

³⁴Reeves, 375-380.

³⁵Harry House, 320 MGB, 82 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey 2705.

³⁶MG William H. Carter, "Our Defective Military System," *North American Review*, March 1917, 364; and Mahon, 141, 151-152. For the problems of National Guard units on

border duty see Lonnie J. White, *Panthers to Arrowheads: The 36th Division in World War I* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1984), 10-15.

³⁷US Department of War, *Annual Report: 1919*, Vol 1. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 306. ; Mahon, 162; and *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary*, 22.

³⁸*Annual Report, 1913*, 190-1; MAJ Charles Gerhart, "Student's Camps of Instruction," *Infantry Journal*, vol. X, no. 5 (March-April 1914), 672-687.; Jack Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1978), 180-1.; and Clifford, 14-15.

³⁹*National Defense Act of 1916*, Sec 54.

⁴⁰MAJ M. B. Stewart, "The Military Training Camps," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XIII, no. 3. (November-December 1916), 250-1. Clifford also notes the primacy of preparedness indoctrination in the camps, 79-80. It is interesting to note the religious imagery that fills many of the sources of the civilian training and preparedness movements.

⁴¹Stewart, "The Military Training Camps," 249, 252. Stewart's article attempted to address the concerns of other army officers, but only highlighted the lack of solid leadership training in the camps.

⁴²1LT O. O. Ellis, "Hints for Service at Training Camps," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XIII, no. 6. (March 1917), 577-9. Ellis and E.B. Garey went on to publish *The Plattsburg Manual: A Handbook for Military Training*, one of the most popular books for officers and aspiring officer used during the war. For the shortage of instructors, see Clifford, 164-170.

⁴³Clifford, 75.

⁴⁴*War Department Annual Report 1919*, 300.

⁴⁵John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, vol. 1 (New York: Frederick Stokes Company, 1931), 30-4, 55-6, 60-3, 73; David Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warming: 1917-1918* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 5-11.

⁴⁶Clifford, 228-234.

⁴⁷Editorial "The Products of the Training Camps," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 1 (July 1917), 468.

⁴⁸*War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 299-304, 320-1. The OTCs started with 16 camps at the major National Army mobilization sites, this increased in 1918 to 24 camps in the U.S. and an additional three camps in Panama, Hawaii, and the Philippines. The 1st series of the OTC (8 May-11 Aug 1917) commissioned 27,341, 2nd series (27 Aug-27 Nov 1917) commissioned 17,237, the 3rd series (5 Jan-19 April 1918) commissioned 11,659, and the 4th series (15 May-26 Aug 1918) commissioned 10,137 officers. The Central Officers Schools eventual consisted of five camps for training infantry officers, and one camp each for training officers for the field artillery, cavalry, engineers, machine gun units, and coast artillery. Although

the war ended before it had any effect on officer training, the SATC encompassed 518 colleges and over 135,000 students.

⁴⁹J. Walker McSpadden, ed., *The American Statesman's Yearbook* (New York: McBride, Nast and Company, 1912), 877 and 913. This figure is based on the total number of students, both male and female, enrolled in Normal schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools of medicine, theology, law, dentistry, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine. If you take away the female students, the male students enrolled in theology and medical schools, and male students physically unfit for service, the rather select pool that the army sought to tap becomes very apparent.

⁵⁰Reeves, 106, for Wood's comments see Clifford, 158-9.

⁵¹MAJ O. O. Ellis and MAJ E. B. Garey, *The Plattsburg Manual: A Handbook for Military Training* (New York: The Century Company, 1917), 199-200.

⁵²Editorial "Reserve Officers' Training Camps," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 1 (July 1917), 467.

⁵³Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering During the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 8-11

⁵⁴Ralph B. Perry, *The Plattsburg Movement* (New York: E. Dutton and Company, 1921), 202.

⁵⁵Fisher, 182-4. Not everyone was in agreement with the army policy. In 1919, an engineer colonel argued, "I think in the selection of officers too much attention was paid to the college education and not enough to their training in the 'University of hard knocks.'" "from 'Replies to Officers' Questionnaires' from Morale Branch of the War College and War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, dated 5 November 1919, 52. National Archives, RG165, NM84, Entry 378, Box 6 (here after cited as Morale Branch Report). 34.

⁵⁶Samuel Woodfill enlisted in the Regular Army in 1898 and had seen combat during the Philippine Insurrection. He was made a reserve lieutenant in 1917 and won the Medal of Honor while leading his company against numerous German machine gun positions around Cunel on 14 October 1918. After the war Woodfill reverted to the rank of master sergeant to safeguard his pension. Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 29, 335-8, and Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 171-4.

⁵⁷Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of Higher Learning in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 25-7, 52-6, 62-4; Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 15; Berry, 114-5.

⁵⁸Letter from Reggie Bradley to Adelaide Bowen, dated 1 June 1918, Entry 435, Box 1 Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University. Similar idealistic and patriotic views are common in the letters and diaries of the AEF's soldiers. Some of the best can be found in James Luby, ed., *One Who Gave His Life: The War Letters of Quincy Sharpe Mills* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1923), 346-7 and 356-7. In a March 1918 letter to his mother

Mills admits, "The more I see of what the Germans have done over here, the more I long to kill some of them." For descriptions of American hyper-patriotism see David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 42-3, 55-7, 66-9.

⁵⁹Stallings, *The Doughboys*, 117-8, Berry, 128, 133-5, 263n; Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), 330-2; H.W. Brands, *TR: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 752-3, 812-5.

⁶⁰*War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 300.

⁶¹Perry, 190.

⁶²All quotes from Morale Branch Report, 35 and 52. This problem was also noted by March in his *Annual Report, 1919*, 306-7.

⁶³Information drawn from officer biographies found in *The Pick: 3rd O.T.C. Ft Devens, MA (yearbook)* (Boston: George H. Dean, 1918). The yearbook is in Special Collections, Command and General Staff College Library. It is interesting to note that five of the officers were prewar regular NCOs promoted to "temporary lieutenants" after the first series OTC.

⁶⁴Letter from Charles Sorust to Adelaide Bowen, dated 20 Nov 1917, Entry 435, Box 1 Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University.

⁶⁵Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript "The World War As I Saw It" in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 21.

⁶⁶F. L. Miller, unpublished manuscript "The War to End All Wars," Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, 3.

⁶⁷Morale Branch Report, 52.

⁶⁸Pershing, *My Experience*, Vol I, 150-4 and Vol II, 237-8.

⁶⁹Memorandum from AEF G-5 to AEF Chief of Staff dated 04 July 1918, 31-32. Similar feeling were expressed by Pershing himself and other high ranking AEF officers. See, James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France: 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936), 407-8. and Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925), 100-4.

⁷⁰Letter written by Milton E. Bernet to Sue, dated 26 July 1917, in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340.

⁷¹*War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 313-314.

⁷²Good examples of this can be found in Frank H. Ward, ed. *Camp Sherman Souvenir* (Cincinnati: Lambertson Publishing Company, 1918), 55, 58-60. The original is in the author's collection.

⁷³Ibid., 37-9.

⁷⁴Historical Committee, *The Plattsburger* (New York: Winkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. 1917), 14. Obviously the author was as ill informed of his nation's history as he was of the situation in France.

⁷⁵Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript "The World War As I Saw It" in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 69.

⁷⁶Ellis and Gaery, *The Plattsburg Manual*, 144-151.

⁷⁷LTC Jennings C. Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XVI, no. 11 (May 1920), 929.

⁷⁸Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript "The World War As I Saw It" in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 35.

⁷⁹Anonymous, *Wine, Women and War: A Diary of Disillusionment* (New York: J. H. Sears and Company, 1926), 3 and 9.

⁸⁰Berry, 375.

⁸¹William E. Hocking, *Morale and its Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), 131-2. Hocking's observed American soldiers training in both the U.S. and in France. His writings were also published in *Infantry Journal* (May 1918).

⁸²James Moss, *Noncommissioned Officers' Manual* (Menasha, George Banta Publishing Co., 1917), 17.

⁸³Andrews, *Leadership and Military Training*, 11; James Moss, *Noncommissioned Officers' Manual*, 17-9. For the army's prewar policies toward NCOs see Fisher, 178-181.

⁸⁴Luby., 366-7. J.C. Wise, "Organization and Initial Training of a Company," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3 (September 1917), 203-4.

⁸⁵Charles G. Campbell, Evacuation Ambulance Company #1, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey.

⁸⁶General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No.98, GHQ AEF 09 April 1919*, 9-10. (Here after cited as the Lewis Board) in USAMHI library.

⁸⁷Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," 930.

⁸⁸US Department of War, *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 9-10.

⁸⁹W. A. Sirmon, *That's War* (Atlanta: The Linmon Company, 1929), 20-1. Sirmon, an infantry platoon leader in the 82nd Division, wrote that he gave one-hour classes to his NCOs

about twice a week. Given his own limited experience and the basic nature of the topics covered, this ad hoc NCO "school" did little to increase his NCOs' professionalism. Also see Fisher, 192-3.

⁹⁰Letter from CPL Albert Carmoody to "Grandma" dated 08 October 1918. The original is in the author's collection.

⁹¹Morale Branch Report, 68-9.

⁹²Morale Branch Report, 69. This was a frequent complaint from junior officers. Most blamed the army itself for failing to increase NCO pay and training.

⁹³Sirmon., 21.

⁹⁴Quoted in Coffman, 57.

⁹⁵Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript "The World War As I Saw It" in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340., 132. Sirmon noted that, like the NCOs, the officers in his regiment had one hour classes conducted after duty hours, two or more times a week. Many of these were French language classes. 26-7, 38, 49.

⁹⁶328th Infantry Historical Committee, *History of the Three Hundred and twenty-eighth Infantry Regiment* (No publisher, 1922), 7-8.

⁹⁷G. Edward Buxton Jr., ed. *Official History of the 82nd Division American Expeditionary Forces* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1919), 4.

⁹⁸White, *Panthers to Arrowheads*, 55-6.

⁹⁹US Department of War, *America's Munitions 1917-1918: Report of Benedict Crowell the Assistant Secretary of War Director of Munitions* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 61.

¹⁰⁰Lonnie J. White, *The 90th Division in World War I* (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1996), 40, and White, *Panthers to Arrowheads*, 55-6. Photos of artillerymen training with wooden guns are common from the period. For a good example see, Ward, *Camp Sherman Souvenir*, 59. The shortage of artillery was also noted in Buxton, 4.

¹⁰¹*War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 299.

¹⁰²This was the opinion not only of Pershing but also of a number of the junior officers and enlisted men who served in France. Pershing's opinion are found in, *My Experience in the World War*, vol. I., 154, and *War Department Annual Report, 1919*, "Final Report of Gen. John J. Pershing," 560-561. The Morale Branch Report is rife with junior officer criticisms of the level of their soldiers' training and also contains a unexpectedly high degree of self reflection as to the officers' own complacency in these shortcomings. See 57-52 and 76-77.

¹⁰³Morale Branch Report, 77.

¹⁰⁴Alvin C. York, *Sergeant York: His Own Life Story and War Diary*, ed. Tom Skeyhill (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), 46. York noted that the officers never managed to correct this deficiency. During the St. Mihiel Offensive, he remembered that his comrades "were still mostly hitting the ground or the sky. They burned up a most awful lot of Uncle Sam's ammunition." 210.

¹⁰⁵"Memorandum on Infantry Instruction," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XVI, no. 7., 509.

¹⁰⁶Andrews, *Military Manpower*, 74-5.

¹⁰⁷Buxton, 1-2. and US Department of War, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces*, vol. 2, *Divisions*. (Washington D.C., 1931), 349. (Hereafter cited as *Order of Battle*)

¹⁰⁸Buxton, 2. The problem was also noted in Sirmon, *That's War*, 26.

¹⁰⁹Kennedy, 24 and 157. and Chambers, 89-95. Chambers notes that many supporters of conscription hoped that military service would "make good Americans" out of the immigrants.

¹¹⁰Buxton, 3.

¹¹¹Buxton, 3. and Kennedy, 24-25, 63-69. The "100 percent Americanism" attacks against enemy aliens had its roots in prewar anti-immigrant campaigns.

¹¹²Frank A. Holden, *War Memories* (Athens, GA: No publisher, 1922), 27-28.

¹¹³*Order of Battle*, vol. 2, *Divisions*. For examples see "Record of Events" for 39th, 40th, 77th, 81st and 91st Divisions. Lonnie White noted the effects of the levies on the 36th and 90th Divisions in *Panthers to Arrowheads*, 40-43 and *The 90th Division in World War I*, 35-37.

¹¹⁴Coffman, 81-84, and White, *The 90th Division in World War I*, 31-32.

¹¹⁵Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 72-73., Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, vol. I., 88, 150-154

¹¹⁶US Department of War, *The United States Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1988 reprint), 304-305.

¹¹⁷US Department of War, *Document No. 656: Infantry Training* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 5. This circular was prepared by the War College to give guidance to the new divisions on what their combat units should train on while at their stateside cantonments. It also included a recommended 16-week training schedule for infantry companies and battalions. In many ways the recommended instruction and schedule reveal how out of touch the War Department was with the actual conditions (shortages of equipment, ranges, instructors, etc.) in the cantonments. An original copy of the document is in the collection of the author.

¹¹⁸*The United States Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 306. Also see 316 and 318. Pershing continued to drive this point home to the War Department and believed that the Chief of Staff was not doing enough to support the AEF training plan. This problem and conflicts with

March over promotion policies and Pershing's prerogatives led to a bitter break between the two men. It was unfair for Pershing to blame March for the stateside emphasis on trench training. By the time that March became Chief of Staff in March 1918, the damage had already been done because most of the divisions were nearing the completion of their training.

¹¹⁹The Lewis Board, Annex R, 6.

¹²⁰*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 329-333. This 30 June 1919 report lists the manuals printed by the AEF AG or War Department for use by the AEF. Interestingly, the British manual *Questions that a Platoon Commander Should Ask Himself When Taking Over a Trench* was the publication with the largest issue. The French *Offensive Conduct of Small Units* was the second most published manual.

¹²¹The problems and ambiguities of Pershing's "open warfare" policy have been explored in, Timothy K. Nenninger, "Tactical Disfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918," *Military Review* 51 (October 1987) and James W. Rainey, "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I," *Parameters* 13 (September 1983). Also see, Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 1 *The First World War* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 142-149.

¹²²Coffman, 66. and *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 3 *Training*, 149.

¹²³*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 12 *Reports*, 77.

¹²⁴Smythe, 146-147 and Trask, 78-79.

¹²⁵*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 301., and *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary*, 33.

¹²⁶William F. Clarke, *Over There with O'Ryan's Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 33.

¹²⁷Buxton, *Official History*, 11-12, and Sirmon, *That's War*, 96-100. Clarke, 38.

¹²⁸Chester E. Baker, *Doughboy's War* (Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 1998), 49.

¹²⁹Sirmon, 96-97.

¹³⁰*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 301.

¹³¹Sirmon, *That's War*, 163, 176-80.

¹³²Charles B. Holt, *Heroes of the Argonne* (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1919), 41. Similar comments appear in Clair Kenamore *From Vauquois Hill to Exermont* (St Louis: Guard Publishing, 1919), 44-5. The Americans were not happy with the confinements of the "live and let live" system and the apparent timidity of their allies. Frank A. Holden, *War Memories* (Athens, Ga.: Athens Book Company, 1922), 103-4. Holden served as an infantry lieutenant in the 82nd Division's 325th Infantry.

¹³³Kenamore, 65.

¹³⁴US Department of War, *Field Service Pocket Book* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 117. This book was a weatherproofed and updated version of the *Field Service Regulations* intended to serve as a guide for officers in the field.

¹³⁵Buxton, *Official History*, 15-16.

¹³⁶Millett, 149; *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 301-302.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 303-304.

¹³⁸Smythe, 170. Understandably, the French had a different take on the American position. A French officer assisting the 26th Division remarked, "It seems to characterize the present attitude of the Americans, who realize that they've got a lot to learn, but don't want anyone to tell them so," quoted in Kennett, "The AEF Through French Eyes," 6. The policy was not as uniformly implemented as Pershing and Fiske may have wanted. The II Corps schools reported that their French instructors did not depart until October 1918. *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 403.

¹³⁹William H. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 108-9. Henderson served as a company commander in Vietnam.

¹⁴⁰Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service*, 21.

¹⁴¹Walter L. Wolf, 129 IN, 33 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey.

¹⁴²C. L. Crane, "The Great War: 1917-1918-1919" Original unpublished diary in the possession of LTC Conrad Crane, Department of History, USMA. A copy of the diary is in the possession of the author. Memoirs and diaries of officers from the period contain many references to their frequent absences from their units for training, leave, and medical care. When the Spanish influenza pandemic hit the AEF in the fall of 1918, unit cohesion was further damaged by the hospitalization of a number of leaders and soldiers.

¹⁴³Quoted in Millett, 147.

¹⁴⁴Berry, 383.

¹⁴⁵Morale Branch Report, 54.

¹⁴⁶Lewis Board, Annex R, 19.

¹⁴⁷*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 354. Pages 333-397 of the same source contain the final reports for all the AEF central schools. The commandant of the II Corps schools recognized these problems and tried to limit technical instruction in his schools to 50percent of the course time while increasing tactical training to the "utmost limit." By the time this change was implemented in late September 1918, however, the improvements came too late to aid most of the school's students.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 400.

¹⁴⁹Morale Branch Report, 54.

¹⁵⁰Sirmon, 104 and 119.

¹⁵¹Morale Branch Report, 44 and 54.

¹⁵²*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14 *Reports*, 340 and 401.

¹⁵³Quoted in George Marshall, ed., *Infantry in Battle* (Washington DC: Infantry Journal, 1939), 137.

¹⁵⁴Martin Samuels, *Command or Control: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 1-6, 94-103.

¹⁵⁵*Army Regulations of 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917*, 11. It is also interesting to note that, like the British, the American predilection for centralized control predated the war. This calls into question the American senior officers' assertions that the wartime quality of the junior officers demanded more centralized command.

¹⁵⁶*Field Service Regulations, 1913*, 59.

¹⁵⁷*Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates*, 9-10.

¹⁵⁸*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 2, *Policies*, 296

¹⁵⁹*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 16, *General Orders*, 1121.

¹⁶⁰Records of the Blois Reclassification Center, National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 541. An example of this problem was the case of 1LT Elmer Absilens. Rather than discharge him for his lack of math skills, the Blois board reassigned him for duty with a Depot Labor Company in the SOS.

¹⁶¹Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 481-484.

¹⁶²Col. M. G. Spinks, "Major Problems of the Inspector General, AEF, and Their Solution," lecture given to the Army War College, 9 October 1933, USAMHI File AWC 401-A-5., 9.

¹⁶³*U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14, *Reports*, 401.

¹⁶⁴George C. Marshall, *Memoirs of My Service in the World War, 1917-1918* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 70-73; George Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 1, *The Soldierly Spirit, December 1880-June 1939*, ed. by Larry Bland and Sharon Ritenour (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 131-133; Forrest Pogue, *George Marshall: Education of a General 1880-1939* (New York: Viking, 1963), 163.

¹⁶⁵ Morale Branch Report, 26.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in, James H. Hallas, *Doughboy War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 279.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in George S. Viereck, ed., *As They Saw Us: Foch, Ludendorff and Other Leaders Write Our War History* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929), 38.

¹⁶⁹ An example of this opinion comes from a lecture given by Col. M.G. Spinks to the Army War College in Washington D.C. on 09 October 1933 entitled "Major Problems of the Inspector General, A.E.F., and Their Solutions." Spinks admits that "temporary officers" were "an exceptionally fine and well qualified group of men," but they were "not familiar with things military. They were uninformed and untrained in military matters." AWC 401-A-5, USAMHI, 8.

¹⁷⁰ *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 15: *Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services*, 304-5.

¹⁷¹ Morale Branch Report, 27.

¹⁷² Ibid. This was a frequent complaint in the Morale Branch Report. Many junior officers noted that their superiors did not treat them as officer and "men of trust."

¹⁷³ Ibid., 21. The report of returning officers is replete with hash and bitter invectives against the AEF's senior leadership. While some of the comments stem from hard feelings, there can be no doubt that much of the criticism is accurate.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ *U.S. Army in the World War*, vol. 14, *Reports*, 403.

¹⁷⁶ Morale Branch Report, 61.

¹⁷⁷ Sirmon, *That's War*, 145.

¹⁷⁸ Horatio Rogers, *World War I Through My Sights* (San Rafael, Cal: Presidio, 1976), 182.

¹⁷⁹ Berch Ford, PVT, 16 Inf, 1 DIV, USAMHI WWI Vet survey.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in Douglas V. Johnson and Rolfe L. Hillman, *Soissons 1918* (Austin: Texas A & M Press, 1999), 45.

¹⁸¹ AEF GHQ, "Notes on Recent Operations: No.1." National Archives, RG 120, Entry 588, Box 111., 1-2.

¹⁸² Quoted in Elmer A. Murphy, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AK: Old Hickory Publishing Company, 1936), 194.

- ¹⁸³Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," 929.
- ¹⁸⁴*Field Service Regulations, 1913*, 19.
- ¹⁸⁵*Infantry Drill Regulations (Provisional), 1918*, 48 and 68.
- ¹⁸⁶*The United States Army in the World War*, vol. 2, *Policies*, 411.
- ¹⁸⁷Vernon Nichols, "Our Battle of the Argonne," *Infantry Journal*, vol. XV (September 1919), 89-194.
- ¹⁸⁸Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," 931.
- ¹⁸⁹Lewis Board, Annex R, 7
- ¹⁹⁰Samuels, 178-197.
- ¹⁹¹"Notes on Recent Operations: No.1.", 1.
- ¹⁹²Lewis Board, Annex R, 6.
- ¹⁹³Viereck, 10. For statistics on American losses see *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary*, 117-124.
- ¹⁹⁴Lewis Board, Annex R, 4.
- ¹⁹⁵Justus Owens to "Mamma" (Settie Owens), dated 14 September 1918, contained in the Justus Erwin Owens Scrapbook, Special Collections, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, folder 2856 (M).
- ¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*
- ¹⁹⁷George Loukides, PFC, 326 IN, 82nd DIV. USAMHI World War I Veteran Survey, File #1547.
- ¹⁹⁸York, *Sergeant York*, 208-9.
- ¹⁹⁹Harry House, SGT, 320 MGB, 82nd DIV, USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, File # 2705
- ²⁰⁰White, *The 90th Division in World War I*, 101-103.
- ²⁰¹Charles MacArthur, *War Bugs* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929), 142-143.
- ²⁰²John S. Miholick, PVT, 23rd INF, 2nd DIV, USAMHI WWI Vet Survey
- ²⁰³Quoted in Viereck, 37. While the German commander may have been trying to put the best face on his defeat, his critique rings true when compared to the American's own assessments. The Americans knew of the German opinion while the war was in progress. The 19 October 1918

report of the II Corps IG contained a paraphrased version of the same Army Group C report. National Archives, Record Group 120, Entry 588, Box 108.

²⁰⁴Pershing, vol. II, 286.

²⁰⁵Harold Fiske, "Report of Training in the American Expeditionary Forces," 36-43 in the Timberman-Fiske Papers, USAMHI.; also Smythe, 188-189.

²⁰⁶Quoted in Smythe, 191.

²⁰⁷Morale Branch Report, 53.

²⁰⁸Lewis Board, Annex R, 2 and 13.

²⁰⁹Buxton, *Official History*, 16, 29, 86-87, 213. The strength of an American "square" division of the First World War was 1000 officers and 27,000 men.

²¹⁰Clarke Howell, Jr., to "Mrs. Barnes" (Mattie Owens Barnes), 15 December 1918, Owens Scrapbook.

²¹¹York, *Sergeant York*, 220.

²¹²Fred Takes, PVT, 325 INF, 82 DIV, file WWI-1760, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey. This file also includes Takes' unpublished diary.

²¹³*Infantry in Battle*, 232-234.

²¹⁴Quoted in Hallas, 267

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, 269.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, 246.

²¹⁷Kenamore, 206 and 240.

²¹⁸Quoted in Viereck, 39.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, 286-287.

²²⁰Robert C. Walton, ed. *Over There: European Reaction to Americans in World War I* (Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1971), 196.

²²¹Quoted in Kennett, 6.

²²²Quoted in Viereck, 297.

²²³Quoted in Walton, 193-195.

²²⁴Quoted in Viereck, 302.

²²⁵“Impressions and Recollections of Operations, C Co, 325 In” Dated 26 December 1918 from “CPT John K. Taylor, Commanding C Company to COL. Whitman, Commander 325th Infantry.” contained in unpublished “History of the 325th INF, Letters from Company Commanders” in BG Whitman Papers, WWI 6052, USAMHI. Taylor's report is of his company's 11 October 1918 attack on St. Juvin.

²²⁶Morale Branch Report, 34.

²²⁷*Ibid.*, 25.

²²⁸*Ibid.*, 25-28. One officer noted that the enlisted men were treated “like slaves.”

²²⁹Raymond B. Fosdick, “Report to the Secretary of War on the Relation of Officers and Men in the A.E.F.,” dated 17 April 1919. National Archives, RG 165, Entry 376, Box 18. While this report came after the Armistice, it reflected the wartime tensions between the two groups.

²³⁰Charles Strickci, SGT, 5 ARTY, 1 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey.

²³¹*The Service Record: Atlanta's Military Weekly*, 5 June 1919, 57.

²³²War Department, *Annual Report for 1919*, vol. 1, Part 3, Continued., 3374-6.

²³³“Report of MAJ Oliver Q. Melton, Commander K Company, 325th Infantry to COL Whitman, Commander 325th Infantry,” undated, in BG Whitman Papers. In the same collection, 1LT W.G. Green reported that on 16 October the “greater part of the company was taken sick with disintery and dyreahea and we evacuated a number of men for this reason. They were to weak to perform their tasks.” (Sic).

²³⁴Memorandum from Colonel A.C. Read, 1st Army Inspector General, titled “Ammunition supply, morale, roads, etc.” dated 2 October 1918. National Archives, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4. COL Read was only partially correct in his assessment. On 3 October the V Corps commander pulled the 79th Division out of the line and sent it to serve with the French II Colonial Corps near the now quiet St. Mihiel sector. On 30 October the division returned to the Muse-Argonne fight, but saw only sporadic fighting for the remainder of the war.

²³⁵Inspector General, 1st Division, “Report of Inspection, 1st Division, 16 Oct. 18.” 3. National Archives, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

²³⁶Inspector General, 26th Division, “Report of Inspection, 26th Division, 31 Oct 18.” National Archives, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 2.

²³⁷Hunter Liggett, *AEF: Ten Years Ago in France* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1928), 207; AEF Inspector General, “Notes Made by the Inspector General, A.E.F., During the Recent Active Operations from 12 September to 11 November 1918, 28. National Archives, RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116.

²³⁸1st Army Inspector General, “Memorandum from Observations and investigations already made by the Inspector General in regard to straggling and the use of shelter in the area

occupied by the First Army," dated 21 October 1918, National Archives, RG 120, Entry 588, Box 113.

²³⁹Ernesto Bisogno, PVT, 328th IN, 82nd DIV, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey

²⁴⁰Joseph D. Lawrence, *Fighting Soldier: The AEF in 1918* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 88, 102, 114-115.

²⁴¹Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 332-3. and Robert C. Humber "Absences and Desertions During the First World War," Army War College Historical Section Report No. 35. (circa 1942) USAMHI., 4.

²⁴²Lewis Board Report, Annex S., 9. Some officers responding to the Morale Branch Survey also held this view. An artillery lieutenant noted, "The United States Army is the best that I have had the chance to observe, but this is because of the of the high grade of its enlisted personnel, and not so much because of its officers," 30-3.

²⁴³Inspector General, 3rd Division, "Report of Inspection, 3rd Division, 15 and 16 Oct 18." National Archives, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

²⁴⁴Lawrence, 90-93.

²⁴⁵US Army Center for Military History website, <http://imabbs.army.mil/cmhp/mohwwi.htm>. This site provides the citation for all WWI Medals of Honor. Army personnel (not including Marines fighting in army divisions) were awarded 88 Medals of Honor for the war. Of these, 39 (44%) went to corporals and sergeants, 24 (27%) went to junior officers, and 6 (7%) went to field grade officers.

²⁴⁶Lewis Board Report, 11. Infantry and machine gun officers also suffered the highest ratio of men killed in action. Eighty out of every 1000 infantry officers were killed in action. Fifty-one out of every 1000 infantry enlisted men were killed in action; Ayres, *The War With Germany*, 121.

²⁴⁷BG Whitman Papers, WWI 6052, Box 1, USAMHI.

²⁴⁸Wilbert F. Stambaugh, PVT, 1st Division, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey.

²⁴⁹Quoted in Hallas, 289.

²⁵⁰Quoted in Murphy, 194.

²⁵¹Quoted in Fisher, 201.

²⁵²Quoted in Hallas, 123. Barkley later won the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Meuse Argonne.

²⁵³*U.S. Army in the World War: Order of Battle*, vol. 2, *American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions*. The divisions skeletonized were the 31st, 34th, 38th, 84th, and 86th. The units turned

into replacement depot divisions were the 39th, 40th, 41st, 76th, 83rd, and 85th. The 85th Division's 339th Infantry and 1st Bn, 310th Engineers were sent to serve in North Russia.

²⁵⁴*U.S. Army in the World War: Order of Battle*, vol. 14, *Reports*, 340.

²⁵⁵"Report of Training in the American Expeditionary Forces," 13-14. The problem with finding suitable human material for leaders was not limited to the officers' ranks. A 24 October IG report from the 77th Division noted, "The question of non-commissioned officers in the infantry companies of this division is serious for the reason that there are not men in the companies who have had sufficient training." National Archives, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

²⁵⁶Benjamin Heath to "Dear George and Mabel" dated 25 October 1918, WWI 2880, USAMHI.

²⁵⁷Fendell A. Hagen, 1SG, 140 INF, 35 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veterans Surveys.

²⁵⁸*U.S. Army in the World War: Order of Battle*, vol. 12, *Reports*, 21.

²⁵⁹Lawrence, 56 and 65.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 89 and 128.

²⁶¹"Report of Training in the American Expeditionary Forces," 44.

²⁶²Millett and Murray, 66-67; Samuels, 117-121; Dennis Winter, *Death's Men* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 63-69; Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Face of War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), 246.

²⁶³Ivor Maxse, "Infantry," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 13th ed., 1926, 468.

²⁶⁴Ayres, 14-15.

²⁶⁵Coffman, 361-362.

²⁶⁶D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, vol. I. 1880-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 264-265, 270-271, 275; Geoffrey Perret, *A Country Made By War* (New York: Random House, 1989), 351-352.

²⁶⁷*National Defense Act of 1916, with Amendments to July 1924*, 21-28.

²⁶⁸John T. Carlton and John F. Slinkman, *The ROA Story* (Washington DC: 1982), 20.

²⁶⁹Quoted in, Lyons and Masland, 12.

²⁷⁰*Infantry in Battle*, first page of the Introduction.

²⁷¹*Ibid.*

²⁷²Larry Bland, ed., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 511-513; Henry L. Stimson, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 348-350; Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope 1939-1942* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 102-103.

²⁷³Robert R. Palmer, et al., *The Army Ground Forces: The Procurement and Training of Combat Ground Troops* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 93-95, 264-273, 335-345.

²⁷⁴Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 11-15, 20-21, 24-28, 40-46. Mansoor, Stephen Ambrose, Goeffrey Perret and Michael Doubler have all recently re-examined the American army's combat effectiveness in World War II. All of these historians have noted the army's ability to select and develop good junior leaders with an ability to adapt to changing battlefield situations. However, it should be noted that the World War II army with its earlier mobilization and different strategic situation had the advantage of more time to properly train its leaders.

²⁷⁵Quoted in, Samuel Lipsman and Edward Doyle, *Fighting for Time* (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1983), 112, and 96-101. For the army's difficulty in procuring and retaining qualified officers and NCOs also see, Perret, 530-532; Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 271-272.

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